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GEORGE SAND

Letters

BROADWAY DIARIES MEMOIRS & LETTERS

EDITED BY EILEEN POWER
AND ELIZABETH DREW

Renan's Recollections of My Youth
G. G. COULTON

Memoirs of Lorenzo da Ponte
L. A. SHEPPARD

Lewis's Journal of a West India Proprietor
MONA WILSON

Journal of a Slave-Dealer
EVELINE MARTIN

Letters of George Sand
VERONICA LUCAS

Letters of Fanny Burney
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DOROTHY MEADS

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FRANCIS BIRRELL

Letters of Sydney Smith
NOWELL SMITH

Essays and Letters of St. Evremond
JOHN HAYWARD

GEORGE ROUTLEDGE AND SONS, LTD.

50351

LETTERS OF GEORGE SAND

SELECTED AND TRANSLATED BY
VERONICA LUCAS

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY
ELIZABETH DREW

846

LONDON
GEORGE ROUTLEDGE & SONS, LTD.
BROADWAY HOUSE, CARTER LANE, E.C.
1930

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Veronica Lucas.

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ILLUSTRATIONS

PORTRAIT OF GEORGE SAND BY CHARPENTIER *Frontispiece*
From *Vie et Oeuvre de George Sand* by Wladmir Karènine, by permission of M. Plon

PORTRAIT OF CHOPIN *facing page* 98
Painter unknown. By permission of M. Alfred Cortot, the owner.

NOHANT: GEORGE SAND'S COUNTRY HOUSE *facing page* 244
From *The Seven Strings of the Lyre*, by permission of Miss Elizabeth Schermerhorn and Messrs. Heinemann.

INTRODUCTION

By Elizabeth Drew

When Jane Austen was left in charge of her sister's garden, she wrote after some weeks: "I will not say your mulberry trees are dead, but I am afraid that they are not alive." Something of the same sort might "I am afraid" be said of the contemporary reputation of George Sand. It is the fate of pioneers for freedom to be forgotten when liberties have been won; it is the fate of "best sellers" to be ephemeral; and it was as a pioneer in the cause of the emancipation of women and as a writer of some of the most popular novels of her age, that George Sand made her reputation. In her own day her ideas and her work were as well known as her affairs of the heart; nowadays no one reads her novels or bothers about her ideas, while her sole claim to popular fame is the number of her lovers, and the stories of her much-discussed *liaisons* with Alfred de Musset and with Chopin. Yet George Sand, although certainly she was not the great genius her age proclaimed her to be, was as certainly a great woman. It is impossible to read her letters, her *Journal Intime* and *L'Histoire de ma Vie*, and not to feel the presence of a warmth of personality which stirs the heart with admiration, respect and affection. She was so courageous, so simple, so loving, so utterly *honest* in all her dealings—we feel throughout her life what Tocqueville expresses in his comment on her individuality when he has met her at a lunch party. He disliked blue stockings and had not expected to be favourably impressed by her. "Nevertheless," he says, "I liked her. . . . What struck me most was to find in her the behaviour natural to great minds." The younger Dumas, with a glow of enthusiasm lit by his

intimate friendship for her, declares her to have " such a heart as there has not been, is not and never will be again under the heavens " ; while Flaubert writes to her son four years after her death, " Ah, your poor dear Mother ! How I think of her and how I need her. Not a day passes without my saying to myself, ' If she were here, I should ask her advice.' " In the face of such tributes from her contemporaries it seems indeed an unkind fate which has so impoverished her memory that she remains in the popular imagination only as the heroine of a number of unhappy love-affairs. Even the shortest outline of her life is enough to show how inadequate any such conception of her must be—how full and rich an existence she spent and how small a proportion of it was occupied with purely amorous matters.

Amandine Aurore Lucie Dupin was born on the first of July, 1804. From her father she inherited royal blood—that of Augustus II of Poland whose son (by the brilliant and beautiful Swede, Countess Aurora of Königsmark) Maurice de Saxe, was George Sand's great-grandfather. Her mother had beauty, but neither birth nor breeding. She was the daughter of a Paris bird-fancier, a woman of loose life, and when Maurice Dupin first met her, on a campaign in Italy, she was the mistress of an elderly French general. Maurice Dupin was killed by a fall from his horse when his daughter was only four years old, and most of her childhood was spent in the home of her grandmother at Nohant, in the province of Berri. Here she lived the life of a boy, dressed in the masculine clothes which she always afterwards preferred, hunted and fished, studied anatomy and physics with her father's old tutor, read voraciously and shocked her neighbours. On her grandmother's death, when she was seventeen, she inherited the estate, but was persuaded, by an appeal to her filial emotions, to go and live with her mother in Paris, thereby ruining her chances of a good

marriage. As her cousin Villeneuve remarked bluntly to her, "What man of honour could ask for you from your mother?" She was very unhappy at home, where her mother bullied and actually ill-treated her, and she was only too glad to escape in 1822 by marrying Casimir Dudevant, the illegitimate son of a colonel in the cavalry. She only escaped, however, from one form of unhappiness to find herself in another. She had two children, Maurice and Solange, and adored them, but her husband proved extravagant, drunken and unfaithful, and after nine years of life with him, she felt the situation to be intolerable. "How is one to combine one's own desires with other people's? I really do not know," she writes to her mother in 1831, and goes on to explain that what she wants is not gay society as her mother imagines, but the same freedom of thought and action as her husband enjoys. "O God! What is this frantic desire to torment each other, which possesses human beings? This frantic desire to reprove each other's faults, to condemn pitilessly everyone who is not cut upon our own pattern."

Later in the same year she made her great decision, left her husband and children, took her life into her own hands, showed her "scorn of nearly everything that other human beings respect," and went to Paris. Within three months she was living with her first lover, Jules Sandeau, and collaborating with him, first in journalism, then in fiction, their joint work appearing over the signature of Jules Sand. (When she published her first novel, *Indiana*, in the following year, she changed her pseudonym to George Sand, and Sandeau thenceforward wrote under his own name.) From the first her personality and her writing claimed the attention of the literary world. Her husband had complained that she made herself "singular" at home, but her singularity only made her the more welcome in Paris, In person she must have been very attractive: small. dark, slight, with a beautiful oval face, great slumbrous

black eyes and masses of dark hair—her femininity only accentuated by her boyish frankness of manner and the blouse and trousers which were her usual working dress. Something of her independent individuality and friendly directness of address can be seen well in a letter to a friend who criticised her clothes. She returns his letter:

> Criticise my costume in more tactful language and from a different point of view if you must discant on such a puerile accessory. But, believe me, it would be better to leave it alone. Read over the lines I have underlined. They are of sovereign impertinence. I think you must have been drunk when you wrote them. Don't think I am angry or shall like you the less, but I warn you not to behave so ridiculously twice; it is not your style at all.

For the first time in her life as a mature woman, she was really happy. "Life, how sweet it is! How good it is! In spite of trouble, husbands, boredom, debts, relations, scandals, in spite of poignant suffering and tiresome worries. To live! It is intoxicating! To love, to be loved! It is happiness! It is Heaven."

But she was to find that romantic love was as thorny a path as marriage, and could be as full of trouble and poignant suffering as of happiness and heaven. It was in August, 1833, that she first met Alfred de Musset. She had left Sandeau early in the year and had been the mistress of Prosper Merimée since that time. She and Musset (who was six years younger than herself) fell in love at once, and lived for some months at Fontainebleau. Then they decided to take a holiday in Italy. The whole story of the tragi-comedy of that visit is best told in *Les Amants de Venise* by Charles Maurras, but a short account must be given here. When George Sand is writing to her half-brother in March, 1834, Venice appears to her the earthly paradise; it satisfied both the romantic and the practical sides of her nature, and were it not for her longings to see her children, she would like to settle there for life.

What more can one desire than all this Moorish architecture in white marble, set in limpid waters under a superb sky ; than these gay, unthinking people, so witty and so full of song, these gondolas, churches, picture galleries, pretty women and smart women ; than the sea breaking with a whisper in one's ears, moonlight such as one gets nowhere else, gondolier choruses which are really well trained, serenaders under every window, cafés full of Turks and Armenians, fine theatres where Porta and Donzelli sing, magnificent palaces ; Gustave Malus' *polichinelle* theatre which runs ten feet underground ; delicious oysters which can be fished from the steps of any of the houses, Cyprus wine at fivepence a bottle, excellent chickens for about a franc, flowers in mid-winter and the warmth of May in February ; I say again, what more could you desire ?

The oysters fished off the steps of the houses were probably the cause of the shattering of the idyll ; that, and sheer satiety of romantic love-making. George Sand and Musset were determined that they would go down to history as famous as Heloïse and Abelard or Romeo and Juliet ; they were to be the perfect lovers. There were many exquisite hours, no doubt, but unluckily there were also times when George Sand fell ill and Musset found that " a sick woman is very tiresome and melancholy " ; times when he would go out and come home drunk in the early hours of the morning ; times when there would be wild scenes of jealous rage, deliriums of fury from temperamental incompatibilities ; and finally times when Musset blurted out crudely that he was tired of his mistress and intended to leave her. When he himself fell ill, all this was forgotten again. George Sand nursed him devotedly, never leaving his side when he was awake and writing frantically while he was asleep to provide the money to keep them. But it was devotion with a difference. She and Pagello, the doctor who attended Musset, had fallen in love, and on his recovery the question of a *ménage à trois* had to be faced. Musset left as soon as he could travel, and returned to France, while George Sand remained as Pagello's mistress,

while at the same time corresponding in terms of passionate affection with Musset. He is her "poor darling angel boy," she is in a frenzy of anxiety about his welfare; she anticipates the bliss of seeing him again in Paris, and assures him that the pleasantest moments of her life are those spent talking with Pagello about him! When she and her new lover reached Paris the following year, the tragi-comedy continued. Musset and George Sand met again and he finds that he is once more "drowned, inundated with love for her." Pagello then leaves Paris and George and Alfred try living together once more. Needless to say—since it is the eternal law of life that what has been, will be—Musset tired of it again in a month and left his mistress in a misery of wounded feelings and wounded vanity. More reconciliations, more recriminations, more heroics, more agonies and more eternal partings followed, but a year later she could write: "I am as completely cured of him as the Emperor Charlemagne was of his toothache." It is hardly necessary to explain that she had a new lover. Two more adventures passed through the same inevitable stages to the same inevitable conclusion before she met Chopin and they became lovers in 1837—and that their mutual love survived the winter in Majorca of 1838-9 says much for them both. Friends had recommended the Balearic Islands as having an ideal winter climate which would benefit the tubercular Chopin, and as being an ideal place in which George Sand could live cheaply with her two children and have ample time and quiet for her literary work. (The courts had granted her a legal separation from her husband in 1835 and the custody of her son and daughter.)

The party arrived in November and were in ecstasies. "What a sky! What a country! We are ravished by it all!" It is true that they find "some little trouble" about settling down, because "nothing is

to be hired, borrowed or sold here," but they hope to overcome these difficulties by sending for stores and necessities from Barcelona. The trouble about that programme proves to be that the boat to Barcelona, scheduled to run weekly, only does so if the sea is absolutely smooth, and this not because of the incapacity or timidity of its navigators or its own unseaworthiness, but because the cargo is always pigs, and the market price of pigs is seriously impaired by a rough crossing! But soon even George Sand's spirit could no longer be gay about the humours of their plight, and the grim realities of their existence took every scrap of the dogged courage and sheer physical endurance she possessed. The report that Chopin was dying of consumption caused a panic among the inhabitants and the party were treated as if they were plague-stricken. Turned out of the house they had rented, they took refuge in a deserted monastery some miles up the valley, hoping that the promised mildness of the winter climate would compensate for their lack of physical comforts. But the weather at once turned cold and damp. For fifty days they lived in the clouds, unable to get down to the plain, as the roads were impassable torrents. Without any servant, or any proper fireplace or any decent food, George Sand ran the household single-handed—cleaned and cooked, taught her children, nursed Chopin—who naturally became much worse instead of better—wrote hard while the others slept, and fought her own rheumatism. Her life with Chopin, however, survived this, and continued for nine years in all: their final rupture was not until 1847. It was brought about, moreover, not by temperamental difficulties between their personalities, but by jealousies on the part of Maurice and Solange, her children. Maurice avowedly disliked Chopin, but it was Solange's underhand mischief-making which apparently caused the bitterness of feeling which

accompanied the breach between the lovers. Much of what preceded their final parting was indeed a mystery to George Sand, though she says she can guess what happened to a large degree. "I know what my daughter is capable of in the way of calumny and I know what Chopin's poor head is capable of in the way of credulity." As can be seen from the long letter to Solange translated here, George Sand came to have little but contempt for that very spineless young woman. As a girl, in her married life with the ne'er-do-well sculptor, she insisted upon marrying, and in her later life when she had separated from her husband, she never ceased to pester her mother as long as there was anything to be got out of her, to make use of her shamelessly, to be the cause of quarrels between her mother and her friends, and to ignore her completely when she had got what she wanted. "I have never found anything but a stone in the place of a heart," George Sand said of her.

The publicity of George Sand's love-affairs followed her all through her life and has followed her well beyond the grave, so that it is difficult to realise how small a part of her life they really occupied, and the width of her activities outside her sexual relationships. Even during the fifteen years when she was living openly with one or other of her lovers, she was at the same time in the thick of personal, business, literary and financial responsibilities, which occupied an enormous amount of her time, and from which it was impossible for her to escape. Apart from her writing she had a busy practical life both in Paris and in the country. She managed her estate at Nohant, interesting herself largely with questions of agriculture and the welfare of the peasants in her district; she was an accomplished, practical housewife; she superintended the education of her children; she identified herself with the activities of the socialist party in politics, with the musical circles of Liszt and Chopin, and with the

most diverse literary interests and groups. Her own creative faculty is staggering in its proportions. She produced eighty works of fiction and wrote an average of two books a year for fifty years. The output of Scott, Dickens, Balzac, of even the prolific Mrs. Oliphant, appear positively meagre beside her prodigious fecundity. She produced books with the ease and exuberance and variety with which a conjuror produces rabbits and watches and paper streamers out of a top hat. She had no individual manner, she created no world which is her own. Her subject matter is as wide as the interests of the reading public, and she presents that public with sensationalism as thorough-going as Mrs. Radclyffe's, with personal emotion as whole-hearted as Charlotte Bronte's, with propaganda as careful as Kingsley's, with pastoralism as simple as George Eliot's, with historical romance as coloured as Scott's.

Throughout her life it was her habit to write for seven or eight hours daily—or rather, nightly—though she declares she has accustomed herself to work for twelve hours at a stretch if necessary. Her usual programme was to go to bed at seven in the morning, sleep until twelve or one, spend the afternoon and evening with her children and friends, and start her literary work at ten o'clock at night. When she is occupied with plays, she says she generally plans a new one during the rehearsals of the one before, and if she gets over-tired, she just sleeps for twenty-six hours at a stretch. She wrote partly because writing seems to have been as natural to her as walking or talking, but she wrote the amount she did, not from choice, but from sheer driving necessity. She describes herself as "nailed to" her work, or as working "like a dog that is being lashed," or of drinking twenty-five francs worth of coffee a day in Venice, to stimulate her, because of the imperative need of earning money. All through her life she

supported not herself only, but her husband, each of her lovers in turn, her son, her daughter, her son-in-law, her daughter-in-law and her grandchildren, besides helping any of her friends in need and giving away large sums in practical charity. As late as 1858 we find her writing to her publisher asking for a promise of immediate payment on the receipt of her manuscript, as she is literally living from hand to mouth; in 1869 she declares she must have earned at least a million francs by her writing and has never been able to save a sou; while in 1871 she confesses to Flaubert why she cannot come and see him: "I cannot move because I have not a farthing and must work like a nigger." Yet when it was suggested, in 1861, that she should accept a sum of twenty thousand francs from the Emperor, in recognition of her literary merits, she declined:

> If I were ill, infirm or in want, I should perhaps ask for myself what I have several times asked the Empress and Ministers for the unfortunate. But I am well, I work, and I have no wants. It would seem to me dishonest to accept generosity to which the more unfortunate have real rights.

As she got older, in spite of her immense literary activity and her enormous correspondence (she wrote an average of ten letters a day in addition to her work) her life became more and more serene and more and more rich in the enjoyment of all the simple things she loved most. She travelled a certain amount, and visited her friends—taking advantage, she says, of the only compensation of independence, "the freedom of rushing about just as I please, of which I was so long deprived." We have pictures of her in her letters, in Brittany, in the south of France, or with Flaubert in Rouen—dragging him out for walks if it is fine and cooking marrow-bones over the fire with him, if it rains—but she spent most of her time in the country, at Nohant. Her son (who seems to have been an amiable loafer), her daughter-in-law and her

grandchildren, made an ideally happy family circle. "It is all laughter and jollity and freedom," she writes to Flaubert, urging him to come and join them. "We do not dress, we make no stipulations, and we all love each other dearly." There, at Nohant, a constant succession of friends came to visit her, there she delighted in watching and tending and adoring her grand-daughters; in studying the flowers and birds for which she had always had a passion; and in helping her son with his marionette theatre. There she worked indefatigably until ten days before her death, and there she died on the eighth of June, 1876.

The mere statement of the number and variety of the activities and interests which absorbed her crowded life, suggests at once that was the outstanding characteristic of George Sand's personality. It was her magnificent vigour and vitality. She tells Flaubert not to burn the candle at both ends, but to keep changing the ends, and her own practice was to keep changing the ends of an entire candelabra. She has that faculty of identifying herself absolutely with the vitality she feels around her.

> There are hours when I escape from myself, when I live in a plant, or feel myself grass, a bird, the top of a tree, a cloud, running water, the horizon, colour, changing, moving, and indefinite forms and sensations; hours when I run, swim, drink the dew, when I am full of joy in the sun, when I sleep under the leaves, soar with the larks, crawl with the lizards, shine in stars and glow-worms.

Right up to her death she had the inextinguishable spirit of youth running in her veins. "Try to keep your soul young and quivering right up to old age," she writes to the younger Dumas, "and to imagine right up to the brink of death that life is only beginning. I think that is the only way to keep adding to one's talent, to one's affections, and one's inner happiness." She certainly practised it herself. Her sheer physical energy was unquenchable; as she truly says, she was

as tough as a goat. At seventy-one she reports she has taken up water-colour painting in her "hours of leisure." "How I adore the botany of seaweeds!" she exclaims on one of her last holidays in Brittany; she bathes daily winter and summer in the river, and when a touring company from the Odéon comes to La Châtre, they all have a supper together after the performance, "music and laughter and iced champagne until three o'clock in the morning, to the great disapprobation of the bourgeoisie."

It is this amplitude of vitality which is the cause of her failure to find permanent happiness with any of her lovers. "Elle se fait aimer que difficilement, et son mâle est rare." Balzac said of her. Her "male" was indeed non-existent, for she could only have found satisfaction as a matriarch in a polyandrous civilisation. She had a genius for love, but no talent at all for the love-affair, which is, after all, an entirely different gift. The capacity to love does not include the capacity to conduct a successful love affair, any more than a good digestion and a fine palate include the capacity to cook a successful dinner. George Sand, in spite of the figure she cut in the popular imagination of her own day, and has cut ever since, had nothing whatever of the courtesan in her nature. Her rebellion was one of principle against "the civil law which continues to support the dependence, inferiority and social nullity of the woman." She stood for equal freedom for the sexes in all human affairs. She lived in an age and under a social scheme whereby a wife had no possessions and no rights; her person and her property were entirely in her husband's hands. It was against that which she rebelled. But the idea of the Family was always the core of her life. What she wanted was married life with freedom for extra-marital sexual relations, and, of course, for her work. If Casimir Dudevant had been a decent-living man, she would never have wanted to break up her home because she

had lovers, any more than the average Latin man wants to break up his home because he has mistresses. Home life and home love were George Sand's most profound instincts. When she had to choose between her family and her lover, between Maurice and Chopin, she chose family ties unhesitatingly. She never loosed them, indeed, even in her most tempestuous period, for more than a few months at a time; their roots were twisted inextricably about her heart. Her love was always far more that of the mother-woman, than that of the mistress-mate. She lacked the coquetry to hold a man sexually for long. Her lovers were always weak men, men in whom the feminine element was strong, artists, or men who were physically delicate, though mentally remarkable. They were attracted instinctively to her strength, to her inexhaustible vigour, to her simple emotional nature, but they tired quickly of her sameness, the lack of light and shade in her temperament, her uncomplicated, generous maternalism. On her side she suffered cruelly when her bored lovers left her, but she recovered from her wounds with amazing rapidity. As she says in her old age to Flaubert: "I have been unhappy myself. I know all, all about it, but then I am so good at forgetting." She had no need of any one individual; what she needed constantly was simply an outlet for her emotional vitality, which was boundless. She could always assuage her sorrows, too, by pouring them out to others. She had no reticence, no reserve and no sensitiveness in her passions, and it is astonishing to see how she was as generous and undiscriminating in her confidences about her lover's quarrels and her family rows, as she was in the bestowal of her love. The one thing she could not do about her emotions was to keep silent about them. She must always explain, and she cares very little whom she explains to—it may to be Sainte Beuve, or to an unknown author who has published a fictitious

account of her life, or to a pupil of Chopin, or to a mere social acquaintance. She was too simple and direct to practise the art of economising her emotional and nervous force, and she really had but little need to. Just as her marvellous creative facility carried her through the writing of her books without the aid of any conscious technique, so her marvellous robust vitality carried her through the living of her life without the conscious reserve of any of her emotional instincts. She is always trying to find reasons for her inconquerable optimism. She declares that it is the result of her search for the ideal, of her belief in God of her renunciation of self, of her work for the Utopia of the future, and so on, but it is surely the result of none of these things, but of her splendid natural resilience of spirit, which made it quite impossible for any misfortune to crush her for any length of time. "The only thing to do about a dead tree is to plant two more," is a remark most typical of her personality.

This quality of buoyant enthusiasm made her an extraordinarily encouraging influence. It is impossible to read her letters and not to feel something of what her presence meant to all who needed spiritual stimulus—to beginners, to children, to the sick, to the sorrowful, to the discouraged. In spite of innumerable disappointments in all departments of her varied existence, she always kept a flag flying in her own heart, and that spirit of gallantry was communicated to all those around her. She had no intellectual greatness—no faculty whatever indeed, for abstract thought. She declares herself, "a believer in love and art and the ideal" but when she attempts theoretical analysis of any of these concepts she becomes merely silly, expanding into flatulent generalisations such as: "Eternal verity is simply the feeling for Beauty in a good heart," or "I assure you life holds only one happiness: to love exceptional beings." Her greatness is in her humanity, in her largeness of

spirit and generosity of sympathy. There was nothing whatever petty about George Sand. She had a complete indifference to money and a complete incapacity to be malicious or intolerant. "O my God! Are there not enough real troubles in the world without meddlers creating imaginary ones?" she exclaims, and when she is told of how Heine, once her friend, had maligned and attacked her, she refuses to quarrel with him, dismissing the subject with "Genius has its sick dreams."

She had no illusions about the quality of her own work; she knew it to be hasty, diffuse, formless, but on the other hand she refuses to admit that mere perfection of form either could or should be the aim of a great artist. She is convinced of Flaubert's greatness, but she never stops urging him to allow his humanity free play in his books. "Keep your excessive regard for form, but do take more trouble about the foundations. Do not take real quality to be an inevitable accompaniment of impeccable form." And on his plea that he writes for an audience fit though few, she is equally firm. "One ought to write for everyone who has any desire to read and can take advantage of good books." She simply brushes aside his arguments in favour of the complete impersonality of the artist, as a theory no sane human being could possibly hold.

> What sick fancy is this attempt to withdraw your soul from what you are doing? . . . What an extraordinary mania!
>
> You say M. Flaubert would be lacking in manners if he were to allow his thought and his literary aim to be evident. That is false, false as hell!
>
> From the moment that M. Flaubert begins to write well and seriously one becomes attached to his personality and desires to be lost or saved with him.
>
> However hard you struggle your story cannot be anything but a conversation between author and readers.

It is this sureness about the large simple essentials of right living and right thinking which gives the

reader of her letters the impression of being in the company of so sane and sympathetic a woman. She confesses that she has changed her opinions she doesn't know how many times during the course of her life but that she regards opinions as of very little consequence. What is of consequence is that civilisation should be led by people who are lovers of humanity and who are above all honest seekers after truth. Hence she hates the Catholic church for its suppression of liberty of thought, and welcomes the development of scientific method as providing the great hope for the future. But she sees shrewdly in the new dogmatism of science as great a danger as in the old dogmatism of the Church.

> To say "you must believe we have found Truth" does not mean that Truth has been found. It is merely to talk like the priests. Science is the road to Truth; so much is certain, but it is still far from the end whether it affirms or denies that it holds the key to the vault of the Universe.

and she adds what was indeed the bedrock of her own faith: *Let us all join together in the love of Truth and the worship of free thought.*

George Sand is not a good letter writer. Among her own contemporaries, for example, she cannot compare with Jane Carlyle or with Elizabeth Barrett Browning. Her fatal facility is as obvious here as in her fiction. She cannot condense. The same fluent verbosity has its way with her and she runs along, always copious and always redundant. She has no wit, and very little humour—and yet, when criticism has played its part, and has pointed out her obvious shortcomings as a woman of letters, it can surely only be those who, like her own daughter, have stones instead of hearts, who can read her letters and not feel themselves in the presence of one of the most genuine, most stimulating and most lovable of women.

ELIZABETH DREW.

LETTERS OF GEORGE SAND

TO HER MOTHER

(at the age of eleven)

Nohant, 25th February, 1815.

OH yes, Maman dear, I send you kisses and I am dying with impatience to have you back. But what a fuss you do make about me! Don't worry, please, dear little Maman. I am quite, quite well and I *am* taking advantage of the fine weather. I go for walks, and run about, I am on my feet all day long, having such a good time and I am eating well, and sleeping much better, and thinking of you more than ever. Good-bye now, dear Maman. Don't worry. Kisses and all my heart.

AURORE.

TO HER MOTHER

(after four years of married life)

Nohant, 13th July, 1826.

My dear Maman,

I received your nice letter some time ago, and since then I have met M. Duvernet who told me that he had found you very well, and had spent the day with you and our friend Pierret. He told me a great deal about you. You know, he is one of your most faithful admirers. He told me that if you came, it would be rather with an idea that you would have made the journey in vain, and that we shall be going away almost

as soon as you get here. That fear is quite unfounded really, for besides the fact that the pleasure of having you here would prevent us from wanting to go away, we have not made any plans for travelling for a long time yet.

When I say *we*, I mean myself and my child, for my husband has not made any vow to become a recluse. Just now he is at Bordeaux to carry out some quite necessary business; he is collecting the purchase-money for a house which he sold last year and the term expired on the 10th of this month. I think he will go back by Nerac so as to spend a few days with his mother. I don't know exactly when he is coming home. But he wanted to lend a hand in the harvest, so he will have to make haste because the corn is quite ripe and I am going to have the reaping begun.

When he has rested a little from that journey he will have to go to Paris to invest his money. Then he will plead our cause himself with you and perhaps you will make up your mind to come back with him.

You must have been seeing Hippolyte[1] pretty often. He will have told you that he has left his little girl with me. I am taking good care of her and she is very well. We have been having some very gay times. First there was Maurice's birthday[2] on which occasion I entertained about a hundred of the peasants here. The dances and the guns and the bells and the bag-pipes and the songs of the topers mixed up with the howls of exasperated dogs all combined to celebrate our young man's birthday with a tremendous uproar and he himself was simply delighted with these noisy honours.

After that we had Mademoiselle George[3] at la Châtre. She gave two performances which were thronged with all the people of the country-side and

[1] George Sand's half-brother Hippolyte Chatiron, illegitimate son of Maurice Dupin.

[2] Her son, Maurice Dudevant, afterwards known as Maurice Sand.

[3] The well-known actress, then nearing the end of her career.

turned the town and the whole neighbourhood upside down. I would tell you about a lot of gaieties before that, but Hippolyte will have told you all about our boar-hunt and that Nohant is getting more *brilliant* every day. We should be so happy if that would make you inclined to come.

Good-bye, my dear Maman. Tender kisses, and please do write. Forgive me for having been so long in sending you our news. I am so busy when my husband is away. You see I am obliged to take his place, and then I have no energy to write in the evening, I go to bed quite tired out.[1]

You know I am very much interested in my doctoring. Not for myself, I think very little about it from that point of view, but for my peasants. I have made some wonderful cures, but it is not altogether an agreeable business, I can assure you.

TO HER MOTHER

(shortly before the break with her husband)

Nohant, 31st *May*, 1831.

My dear Maman,

You are not feeling very cheerful, are you, because you are still going to be alone. Congenial companionship is very difficult to combine with liberty. You like to have people with you, but you hate any kind of constraint, and that is just like me. How is one to reconcile one's own desires with other people's? I really don't know. Perhaps one really ought to shut one's eyes to a great many little things, to tolerate a great many imperfections in human nature and to resign oneself to certain annoyances which are inevitable whatever one's circumstances may be. Are you not rather severe towards transient wrong-doing? It is true that you forgive easily and forget quickly; but

[1] This is interesting, when considering the gradual development of George Sand's vigour, mental and physical. Seven years later she would sit up all night to write her novels.

are you not a little hasty in condemnation? For me, my dear, liberty of thought and action is the first of blessings. If one could combine with that the little cares of bringing up a family it would be much sweeter, but is that at all possible? The one is always a nuisance to the other, liberty to one's home-circle, and one's home-circle to liberty! You are the only judge in the question of which you would prefer to sacrifice! I know that my own greatest fault lies in the fact that I *cannot* submit to the least shadow of constraint. Everything that is imposed on me as a duty becomes odious at once; whatever I do of my own free will is done with all my heart. It is often a great misfortune to be made like that and all my failings towards other people when they do occur, originate there.

But can one change one's own nature? If people are very indulgent to this fault of mine I find that it corrects itself in the most wonderful way. But when I am perpetually reproached about it, it gets much worse, and really that is not out of a spirit of contradiction; it is just involuntary, irresistible! I really must venture to tell you, dear Maman, that you have very little idea what I am really like. It is a long time now since we lived together and you often forget that I am now twenty-seven years old and that my character was bound to undergo many changes since I was quite a girl.

You seem to impute a love of pleasure and a need of frivolous amusement to me that I am far from possessing. It is not society, and noise, and theatres and new dresses that I want; you are the only person to make that mistake, it is liberty that I long for. I want to be able to walk out quite alone and say to myself: "I will dine at four, or at seven, just as I like. I will go to the Tuileries through the Luxembourg instead of the Champs Elysées if the whim seizes me." That would please me far better than the ordinariness of ordinary people and the stiffness of drawing-rooms.

If I meet people who are dense enough to take my innocent fantasies for hypocritical vices I cannot persuade myself to take the trouble to undeceive them. I only know that such people bore me, misunderstand me . . . yes . . . and outrage me! I make no answer. As far as I am concerned they are wiped out. Is there anything to blame in that? I seek neither vengeance or reparation for I am not vindictive: I simply forget. I know people say I am not a serious person because there is no hatred in me and I have not the pride to justify myself.

Oh, God! What is this frantic desire to torment each other, which possesses human beings? This frantic desire to reprove each others' faults bitterly to condemn pitilessly, everyone who is not cut upon our own pattern.

You, dear Maman, have suffered much from the intolerance and false virtues of high-principled people. How terribly at one time they blackened your beauty, your youth, your independence, your happy facile character? What bitterness poisoned your brilliant destiny! If you had had a tender indulgent mother who opened her arms to you at each fresh sorrow and said to you: "Men may condemn you, but I absolve! Let them curse . . . for I bless you!" what a comfort it would have been to you in all the disgustingness and littlenesss of life!

So some one has been telling you *that it is I who wear the breeches*. It is not a bit true, if you were to be here for twenty-four hours, you would see that it was not. On the other hand I have not the slightest desire to see my husband in petticoats. Let us each wear our own clothes and be equally free. I have my faults, but my husband has his, and if I were to tell you that ours is a model household and that there is never a cloud between us you would not believe me. There is good and bad in my circumstances, just as there is for everyone else. The fact is that my husband

does just as he likes. He has mistresses or does not have them, as his appetite dictates to him; he drinks muscat grape juice or plain water according to his desire at the moment; he saves or spends just as he feels inclined; he builds, plants, makes changes, and rules the property and the house just as he intends. I have not a word to say in any of it.

I don't mind because I know he is a good organiser, that he is more inclined to be economical than to waste money and that he loves his children, and looks at everything from the point of view of their welfare. As you may see, I have no feelings for him but esteem and confidence and since I have given the property entirely into his control, I suppose no one will continue to suspect me of wishing to dominate him.

I need so little, nothing but the same income and the same standard of comfort that you have. I should be satisfied with an allowance of three thousand francs a year, considering that I can already add to it with my pen. For the rest, it is only fair that my husband's absolute liberty should be reciprocal; if that were not the case he would become hateful and contemptible to me, and that he does not wish! I therefore live quite independently. I go to bed when he thinks it is time to get up. I can start off to la Châtre if I like, or just as easily to Rome; I come in at midnight, or at six in the morning. It is entirely my own business. Please judge anyone who criticises me for it with the head and the heart of a mother, for both ought to be on my side.

I shall go to Paris this summer. The more you show me that I am dear to you and that you are pleased to have me with you, the happier and the more grateful you will find me. But if I find bitter criticism and offensive suspicion in your orbit (it is not from you that I fear them) I will make room for the more powerful, and without vengeance, without anger, I will enjoy the peace of my own conscience and my

liberty. You really have too much mind and heart not to realise soon that I do not deserve all this hard treatment.

Good-bye dear little Maman. My children are well. Solange is lovely and naughty. Maurice is too thin really, but such a good boy. I am so pleased with his character and his mental development. I rather spoil my fat little girl. But the fact that Maurice has become so sweet now reassures me for their future. Write soon, dear Maman. Kisses with all my soul.

TO CHARLES DUVERNET

(A friend at la Châtre)

Nohant, Monday evening.
25th June, 1831.

As we were caught on Friday between the paternal and benevolent attentions of our host and the *decaudinades*[1] we could hardly get two consecutive words together. I did not want to go away, my dear old Charles, without telling you how much your friendship has been to me during the last three months. We should not really know each other and our childish comradeship would have taught us nothing of each other, if a mutual affection had not sprung up since to strengthen that bond and to draw our hearts together, those hearts, whose respective peculiarities needed to be explained to each other.

Without you I should have been far more unhappy at home. Your interest, the confidence with which I can open my heart to you has softened this time of trial. And by putting our vexations together we have been able to bear them better, At least that is what I have felt and I hope it was the same on your side.

[1] Duvernet had a friend called Decaudin.

Mad folk like me, have this to their credit that they are never niggardly with affection once they have given their hearts. Though disillusioned in everything else I could not lose faith in those who have been faithful to me, or those who have understood me, with all my faults, with my anti-social spirit and my scorn of nearly everything that other human beings respect. I feel that I have enough generosity of mind to begin life all over again with such as those, to live a life of affection, hope and confidence that even the memory of so many disappointments behind could never chill. Oh! with people like that I could easily forget it all: I could forget the friends who turn traitor, and those who are bored when you confide your troubles to them, and those who are afraid of compromising themselves if they try to help you, and the lukewarm people and the perfidious ones, and the awkward ones who spatter you with mud when they are trying to wipe it off. I will believe in you as I used once to believe in them, and will not make you responsible for their misdoings whilst delivering myself up, with only some reserves to your promises. I believe in them and count on them.

It was by the ruin of the past, of prejudices and frustrations that we came to see each other as we really are, as Nature made us, I think.

It was in confiding our mutual infirmities to one another that we came to take an interest in one another. If we had never felt the need of consolation, nor the need of giving comfort we should perhaps have remained isolated in this foolish futile circle of ours here, a society which can *never* forgive us for wanting to be independent of its narrow laws. Let them talk! Let them look upon our happy little association as a home for lunatics! We will live apart, and only consider the outsiders as subjects for laughter or pity. I hope you will be able, like me, to be

absolutely impervious to their attacks, and to find your real life and all your happiness in the very heart of this small company who appreciate you and tolerate me, I, who am grateful if I can only get indulgent treatment. Do not all our inward troubles become bearable when we feel that some one is ready to make up to us for the injustice and ingratitude of others?

Oh! my dear Charles I hope this thought will be as helpful to you as it is to me, may it heal your wounds and blot out all hurtful memories, may it be a foundation for a new future and rejuvenate your heart as it has rejuvenated mine, which is much older! more fatally disturbed, alas! than yours! Believe in us your true friends and you will be happy everywhere, even at la Châtre.

Come to your friends in our Paris, where, at any rate if there is no public liberty, one has individual liberty. From time to time we shall get stalls for the Italian Opera, or the Opera. When none of us have a farthing left, we will take to visiting cathedrals, which costs nothing and is always interesting. Or else we will take the air on my balcony, where we will watch the mob of modernity pass by, and spit upon them, poor things, fighting and beaten as they are, mad every one of them! Mad enough to excite pity! We will throttle the *Gaulois* to prevent it from taking a hand in the strife, we will shout down Planet, and each one of us will take pleasure in the other's pet hobby, without disturbing their owners or boring ourselves about them. By day, we will work, for one must work! As someone was saying the other day at Coudray, if one is not busy in the morning there is no pleasure in being free in the evening. *One must impose restraint on one half of life if one wants to enjoy the other half.* You must create yourself an occupation of some sort, if it is nothing more arduous than putting Claire and Philippe in

communication with one another, or Berido with the Prima Donna.[1] We will hire a piano, and we will both take that up again. If you don't really like your bachelor existence, there will always be the possibility of marriage; for anyone may break with us directly they feel inclined. But come and try us first; after that you will see. There will always be marriageable girls at hand. It is a species which multiplies exceedingly, by the grace of God.

And then, dear old Charles, whether a husband, or a widower, or a bachelor, whether you are Charlot meditating in your little room on the miseries of the student, the artist, or the bachelor; or whether you are *Monsieur le Receveur* in the bosom of his interesting family, you will always be at liberty to come and look us up, and if your future wife should forbid it, don't leave off loving us, and believe that when you can slip off your shackles, you will find us delighted to see you and fearfully anxious to give you a good time. In the meantime we will often talk about you. Goodbye then. With my love. Come as soon as you can.

TO HER SON MAURICE

(After deciding upon separating from her husband)

Paris, July, 1831.

You know, my little boy, that it makes me very sad when you do not write to me. I have received your three letters, but that is very few. It is only one letter a week. You used to write me two or three a week. Aren't you fond of writing letters any more? You need not shew your letters to anyone, nor write them so neatly that they become a task. If you send me blots and your drawings of old peasants I shall like it

[1] These are heroes and heroines of some unpublished literary fragments by George Sand.

just as well. So write to me just as badly as you like, even if it is only a few lines. To go a whole week without any news of you and your sister seems very long and I am often very sad. I must be sure that you are happy and gay, or I can't be happy myself.

There are such beautiful pictures in the Museum: the Museum is a great picture-gallery where all the artists exhibit their pictures for a few months so that a lot of other people may see them. The nicest one of all represents two children of seven and eight who are sitting together on a bed. One of them is ill and is leaning his head on his brother's shoulder. The other is quite well and is holding open a book of pictures to amuse his brother. It is a picture of two little English princes long ago who were strangled in the Tower of London by wicked people.[1]

Then there are a number of beautiful statues that you would recognise now that I have taught you some of the stories of mythology. The loveliest of all is the *The Three Graces* in white marble; there is also a pretty little allegorical divinity, which I have never told you about. It is called *Candour* or *Innocence* and is represented by a child holding a shell from which a serpent is drinking. That means, that innocent people, just like children, never suspect the harm that bad people might do to them. If you don't understand that very well, Boucoiran will explain it better to you. There is also a plump little girl, rather like Solange playing with a little goat, the goat is eating a wreath of leaves on the child's head. That group is in beautiful white marble too. Then there is a Mercury and a Diana, and lots of other ladies and gentlemen of your acquaintance. The fêtes have lasted three days. I saw the king and all the troops from my window. Yesterday we had sports on the water. Sailors dressed in white with sashes and ribboned hats fought each other in pretty little boats. Of course they were only

[1] This picture is by Paul Delaroche. Its title is "*Les Enfants d'Edouard.*"

pretending to fight to make a spectacle. A great many of them fell into the Seine, but as they were all good swimmers they only laughed about it and soon got into their boats again. A fine pavilion had been set up on the bank for the judges of the competitions, who gave away the prizes to the winners.

I took Leontine with me and she saw it all because tall M. Fleury held her up on his shoulder. I came home with a bad headache. In the evening I saw the illuminations from my bedroom window. There were four great illuminated columns round the statue of Henri IV. The towers of Notre Dame were illuminated too; it was all splendid. I could see the fireworks which were let off on the Place de la Revolution, from my balcony. It is a long way from me, but the rockets went up so high that I could see quite well and some of them burst out into flames of the tricolour. It was superb. Then there were camel-races on the Champs de Mars. Men dressed up like Bedouins were mounted on horses and dromedaries. One of them had a fall and was killed. Then came a review of all the troops on the boulevard; there are said to have been fifty thousand men. All this would be delightful if there were not such a big crowd to look on. One really runs a risk of being stifled in the crowd and three-quarters of the people see nothing at all, because there are people in front and all round. All the theatres are playing *gratis*, that means that one can go in without paying. Guns were fired, and petards hoisted, and bonfires lighted at every house-door, and in every street. That lasted two whole days. You might have thought that there was a battle going on in Paris. I shall be very glad when it is all over and the town is quiet again. Write to me often and tell me what you are doing. Your letters are too short. Kiss your sister for me and always be very fond of her. Good-bye my dear little boy, think of your mother who sends you a million kisses.

TO HER SON MAURICE

(when she had taken Solange to Paris)

Paris, 4th May, 1832.

My little darling,

We are quite well. Your sister is perfectly sweet now. I always take her for her walk in the Luxembourg, or the Jardin des Plantes. The latter is superb and simply balmy with acacias. Nohant must be very pretty now. Are there many flowers out and is your garden doing well? My garden consists of a dozen flower-pots on my balcony, but some of them have put out new shoots as long as my hand. Solange often breaks them off and so that she shan't get scolded for it she tries to mend them with sealing wax. We talk about you every evening and every morning, at bedtime and when we are getting up. Last night I dreamt that you were as tall as I am; I hardly recognised you. You came up to kiss me and I was so pleased that I cried. When I woke up I found that the fat baby had climbed on to my bed and was kissing me. She is growing tall, like you, and she is getting thinner at the same time. No one will believe that she is not five yet. She is a head taller than all the other children of her age.

Whenever anyone gives her any sweets she puts them away for you, but an hour later she has forgotten all about it and eats them up. When we come to see you we will bring you some.

Good-bye, my darling little boy. Write oftener and write longer letters if you can. You do not tell me what you are learning with Boucoiran. Good-bye. Kisses from my heart.

TO SAINTE-BEUVE

My friend,

As you know I have been most insultingly attacked but I am quite indifferent to it. On the other hand I am by no means indifferent to the zeal and enthusiasm with which my friends have undertaken my defence. I hear that you are going to answer the *Europe Littéraire* attack[1] both in the *Revue des deux Mondes*. and in the *National*. Do it by all means since it is the dictate of your heart; I will not bother you with thanks, but you know that in any similar situation my pen and my life would be at your service.

I want to go on to another subject which I am very anxious for you to know about. Since your friendship has taken alarm and your esteem been shaken at times by the doubt, astonishment and uncertainty created by report, I want you to see clearly into the motives of my conduct, actions and intentions. If you cannot approve at least there will be no reason for withdrawing your confidence.

I have fallen in love, and this time very seriously indeed with Alfred de Musset. It is not a caprice; it is a devoted attachment, which I will deal with in detail in another letter.[2] I cannot undertake to prophesy for this affection a duration which would make it in your eyes as sacred as the affections to which you are susceptible. I once loved for six years, and another time for three, and this time I do not really feel able to say how long it will last. Before this my loves have been fantasies of the mind, but my heart was never so hard-worked that I need fear for it now; I say so because I feel it is so.

Far from feeling afflicted and misunderstood, this time I have met with a candour and loyalty and

[1] The first attack on George Sand in *Europe Littéraire* was an article called *La Vie Littéraire,* published Aug. 9th, 1833; the second was an article on *Lelia* published Aug. 12th, 1833.

[2] This letter was never written.

tenderness which intoxicate me. It is the love of a young man together with the friendship of a comrade. It is something that I had no idea of before and never hoped to meet, certainly not in that quarter. At first I denied this love, and repelled it and refused it, but now I have given way to it utterly and I am so happy. I am so happy. Thank God for me.

There are still within me some hours of sadness and vague suffering, but that is me, and comes from myself. If I were to abjure the infirmities of my nature I should no longer be myself and should live in fear of suddenly returning to my original state.

Now I am in the true path of regeneration and consolation; do not dissuade me from it!

If you should be astonished and alarmed at my choice, if this union of two beings who have both independently denied what they *do* now find in one another, please wait before prophesying the end, until I have had the opportunity of relating our romance more convincingly. Could I not see you for an hour before I leave for Berry? Do try to find the time. Perhaps we may call this one of those *special occasions* when having an important secret to tell you it would be advantageous for me to see you.

Now that you know what is in my heart I am going to tell you what I propose to do. A great many impertinent people have said that Planche was my lover; it does not matter much, for *he never was*. It is now very important that people should be certain that he never was, although personally I do not mind much if they think he was.

You will understand that I cannot have any suspicion that I would share my love with two men; it is not in the nature of any of us three!

So I have had to adopt the course, very painful to me, of dismissing Planche altogether. We had a candid and affectionate explanation together and parted with a cordial hand-shake, still feeling affection

from the bottom of our hearts and unfailing esteem. I am so glad to tell you about it so that Planche may be quite cleared of the reproaches which have been loaded upon him, reproaches which I never could bother to look into, and never took the slightest notice of, because I had none to make him, myself. Now I have worried a good deal over the idea that our parting may have looked like a quarrel and may have strengthened the bad opinion that some people had of him. I pay very little attention to those people who have no confidence in my word and who, all things being equal, prefer to believe evil rather than good. Such people are either malicious or out of health. I fear the malicious and have no need of the others.

I do not know whether my bold conduct will please you or not. Perhaps you think that a woman should hide her love. But then you can surely understand that my position is quite exceptional and that henceforward the full light of day will beat upon my private life. I am no slave of public opinion, at the same time if I can enlighten it upon some capital point, it is my duty to do it. Public opinion is desirous of asserting that I am inconstant and capricious; that I would pass from Planche to de Musset and from de Musset to another lover.

It does not matter very much, so long as they do not say that I would have two lovers at once. I am always being misunderstood, but after all, what is that? But at least I will not stand being outraged and blackened by rumour, and so I prefer to tell someone the *truth!*

As for the integrity of my soul's sincerity and the amount of strength and virtue which it has preserved in the course of my sad life such delicate matters are only to be appreciated by two or three intimate friends. You know that you are the friend I look up to most. I must see you and write to you so that you may know

my whole soul, so that you may chasten its errors and do justice to its poor virtues. I feel I must have some certainty, that near me or far from me, two or three noble souls, marching on through life, are supporting me with their good wishes and their sympathy. Those are my brothers and sisters whom I shall meet round the Throne of God at the end of our pilgrimage.

Adieu my friend.

Yours,

George Sand.

TO HIPPOLYTE CHÂTIRON, HER HALF-BROTHER

(while she was in Venice with Alfred de Musset)

Venice, 16 *March*, 1834.

My dear friend.

Thank you for your letter. In spite of all, the thought of you always gives me pleasure. I have been a long time answering you because I have just been rather seriously ill. I am well again and am beginning to get acclimatised to Italy just as my time here is coming to an end. I shall come back again some day because going back to France from this country is like being driven out of Paradise. That is how it seems to me.

I was not much taken with Tuscany but there is nothing in all the world more beautiful than Venice. What more can one desire than all this Moorish architecture in white marble, set in limpid waters under a superb sky; than these gay, unthinking people, so witty and so full of song, these gondolas, churches, picture galleries, pretty women and smart women; than the sea breaking with a whisper in one's ears, moonlight such as one gets nowhere else, gondolier-choruses which are really well-trained, serenaders under every window, cafés full of Turks

and Armenians, fine theatres where Porta and Donzelli sing, magnificent palaces, Gustave Malus' *polichinelle* theatre which runs ten feet underground, delicious oysters which can be fished from the steps of any of the houses, Cyprus wine at fivepence a bottle, excellent chickens for about a franc, flowers in mid-winter, and the warmth of May in February; I say again, what more could you desire?

I have not tested the other pleasures of the winter. As you know I have no love of society. I keep to two or three really charming and interesting people and I watched the carnival from my window.

I thought it fell far below its reputation. Of course I ought to have seen it as it is carried on at the masqued balls, in the theatres, but I was ill at the time and so I could not go. I regret it very little; I have found what I came for, here: a lovely climate, a profusion of works of art, a free calm life, time to work, and friends. Why can I not build my nest on this branch? Because my children are not here, so that I can only be happy as a bird of passage. I am waiting for April before I cross the Alps and I shall go by way of Geneva. So I quite hope to be in Paris in the course of next month.

When I have hugged my Maurice, I will go and spend the summer in Berri. Do see that Casimir keeps Solange at home and does not send her to school before my return; for that would prevent me from going to Nohant and would put out all my plans for rest and economy.

You do not seem as delighted with la Châtre as I am with Venice and you draw me a very farcical picture of its inhabitants. Really society is a foolish institution. Love of work is the only salvation. I bless my grandmother who forced me to make a habit of working. Now the habit has become a faculty, and the faculty a need. I have come to be able to work thirteen hours at a stretch without making myself ill over it, but as a general rule I work seven or eight

hours a day whether I like the task or no. The work brings me in a good deal of money and occupies a great deal of time which otherwise I might employ in getting the spleen, if I had nothing to do, for that is the tendency of my bilious temperament. If like you I had no wish to write, I should at any rate read a great deal. My great regret lies in the fact that sheer necessity of earning money always obliges me to drag something out of my brain instead of furnishing it with new matter. One of my aspirations is to have a year of complete liberty and solitude in order to pile into my head the many masterpieces of foreign literature which are hardly known to me. It would be a great pleasure to me and I envy those who can give themselves up to such study at will. But when I have scrawled out the day's task I have no energy left for anything but smoking cigarettes and drinking coffee on the Square of St. Mark's talking appalling Italian with my Venetian friends. It is all very pleasant, not my Italian, but the smoking, the friends and the Piazza of St. Mark's. I wish I could transport you to it with a wave of a magic wand and enjoy your astonishment. At home we know so little about architecture and in that respect our poor Paris is so ugly and dirty and petty and such a failure. It is, however, the first capital in the world for luxury and material comfort. Industrial activity triumphs over all and makes up for every deficiency, but anyone who is poor in Paris must undergo all sorts of privations. I live better here on three hundred francs a month than I do in Paris on nine hundred. Why the devil don't you and your wife come and settle down here, as you are quite independent, and have neither house, nor family nor love of society nor obligatory relations in France. You could bring up your daughter here just as well as anywhere else. You would have a thousand advantages that you can't get in Paris ; much larger more beautiful rooms, a gondola with a gondolier

who acts as servant at the same time, and all this for sixty francs a month and it would come to the same thing as a carriage and pair, a coachman and footman in Paris, which means at least twelve or fifteen thousand francs a year. Firewood and wine are very cheap, clothes and every kind of merchandise, provisions from all countries at half the Paris prices. I can get a pair of morocco shoes here for four francs. Yesterday three of us went to a cafe; we each had three ices, a cup of coffee and a glass of punch, besides as many cakes as we wanted to complete the amenities of two long hours of chatter. All that only cost us four Austrian *livres* and an Austrian *livre* is worth about thirty-six *centimes*.

If you want to come, I can escort you when I return to spend next winter here. The journey would cost a thousand francs for you two, but you could live for three thousand francs a year. That is probably less than you spend in Paris and you would get to know Venice into the bargain; it is the liveliest city in the universe. If my son were not absolutely fixed at the College Henri IV, I should certainly bring my daughter with me and settle here for a few years. I should go on working as I am accustomed to do now and I should return to France when I felt inclined with a nice little sum of money.

But I cannot give up being with my son at least once a year and everything I earn here will always be eaten up by my journeys, or in staying in Paris. Good-bye old boy. Write to me about Maurice and tell me too about your daughter. I hope they get on well when they meet on holidays.

Much love to Emilie, Leontine, and yourself. It is a long time since I had any news of my mother, give her this news of me and beg her to write.

TO DOCTOR PIETRO PAGELLO

Venice, 1834.

(This may be called George Sand's first letter to Doctor Pagello though it was written beside Alfred de Musset's sick-bed under the pretence that it was a romantic poem on Venice. Pagello was present while she wrote it, and she handed it straight to him. George Sand did not perhaps intend it seriously as a declaration of love and it is probable that Pagello received it more or less as a joke, but their passion rapidly developed after this occasion, and George Sand's other letters to Pagello speak for themselves.)

Am I to be your companion or your slave? Do you love me or do you only desire me? When your passion has been satisfied will you have the grace to be grateful? If I give you great happiness will you be able to make me feel that I did? Do you realise *what* I am, or will you take good care not to realise it? Am I to you, that something mysterious which you have sought for and dreamt of all your life? Or am I in your eyes no more than one of the women who spend their lives, fattening in *harems*? Do you know in the least what passion of the *soul* is, passion which time cannot weary, which no physical caress can lull or cloy? When a beloved woman falls asleep in your arms do you stay wakeful to contemplate her and weep and thank God? Do the pleasures of passion stupefy and brutalise you, or do they throw you into an ecstasy which is divine? Does your soul's memory outlive that of your sensations when you have drawn away from the beloved's breast? When I see you so tranquil can I be sure that you are meditating, or is it merely a mental doze? When your gaze becomes languid does it mean passion or weariness? You may be thinking that you know nothing of me and I nothing

of you? It is true that I know nothing of your past life, or of your character or of other men's opinions of you. You may be the best or the worst of men, but I love you without caring whether or no I can respect you. I love you only because I love you, but perhaps before long I shall be constrained to hate you. . . .

TO DOCTOR PIETRO PAGELLO

Venice, 1834.

My Pietro, my Pietro! You really are a man! One can love *and* respect you! How very kind you are, my friend, how sympathetic and generous! How unhesitatingly you sacrifice yourself without a moment's hesitation! Yes, I do respect and love you! And I will repay you with a love that you deserve. What comparisons you force me to make every moment with others who have loved me. I have known some men worthy of respect but you are the best of all! You have their good qualities, without their faults. The poor sick boy (Alfred de Musset) whom you brought back to me this evening has great difficulty in understanding you, but he does now profess to admire and bless you. I cannot say that I believe in this conversion and I do not believe that that frenzy will be the last, I expect much more trouble with him. Still I cannot help pitying him when I think of him left to himself with no friendly support, in feeble health, with his head in such a weak condition and courage pitifully lacking. In spite of my foreboding of future suffering I am glad when he returns to my care.

Poor young poet with such an overwhelming sense of greatness, but without enough force to express it in enduring form! He certainly is to be pitied, for he is very much to blame, so that when he finds himself deserted he cannot take refuge in his own conscience. He cannot like you, dear friend, find consolation in the

feelings that he has fulfilled a duty or performed a good action; he obeys every single evil impulse and then he suffers for it. He is an object of pity really! He often offends me so grievously, that my pity is stifled by a kind of contempt for his weakness and injustice. But now he has two to watch over him, and the compassion of the one will revive when that of the other is exhausted. Help me to carry out this task to the very end. Then we shall be rapturously happy when we can again be in each other's arms, feeling that we have nothing to reproach ourselves with! We shall be able to remember that we have given up days to him which might have been devoted to our own happiness, but instead were consecrated to compassion and we shall revel doubly in hours of bliss which will be vouchsafed to us again. We will receive them as a reward from heaven, that is, if my love and caresses seem to you an adequate reward for your great-hearted goodness? Be sure that I will repay you to the full, my Pietro. In order to deserve you one has to appreciate you and really understand you, and therefore I do deserve you.

. . . .

Adieu, my soul, adieu! I hope we may meet before long. Alfred will come and fetch you if you do not come of your own accord. I quite approve of your having told him that you had no wish to visit us again, but that if he *insisted*, you would yield.

I am afraid that between us two you must suffer a good deal. But it is better than not seeing each other at all, and it would be very difficult for me to meet you anywhere. You have discovered already the sort of scene it leads to! He will quarrel with me for three days and nights if I am out for a few hours! For he never sleeps. He lies awake the whole time to see what I am doing. This watchfulness is unendurable to me. I feel that I am being caged, stifled, and at night I wake up with a load on my chest. I am always

thinking that I hear a stealthy step round my bed and I sleep with one eye open. I need enormous horse-power of resolution to prevent myself from telling him that he is insufferable to me.[1] His protestations make me feel even worse. It is impossible not to be moved by his tears, but it is also impossible to make declarations to him of what I do not feel. My heart is swollen and torn with anguish. I am longing for you and want to press you to my weary loaded breast, loaded with weariness and sorrow. My nerves are all aflame as if I had been drinking brandy.

In my dreams, I see you pass. I seem to be running after you but a jealous hand holds me back from you. Then I have a thirsty ardour to be with you. I hold out my arms to seize you and I wake just as I am calling out to you. Ah! if I could cry out your name in the night twenty times over, I feel that it would appease me, but I have to keep silence and oh! the suffering of it! Oh! give me courage! Adieu. I love you . . . love you . . . love you.

TO DOCTOR PIETRO PAGELLO

Venice, 1834.

You must have courage, my angel. I cannot go out with you at present. I have had a grievous time of it to-day. Alfred has been very good, but so sad. I see that he no longer dares to oppose our intimacy, but it does make him suffer so much. I should be a monster if I did not spare him all I can. I know that far from complaining, you will approve. I have confidence in my love and my given word, and I will do everything for him that affection and compassion may dictate, but my heart and body shall never again

[1] Six months later George Sand was entreating Alfred de Musset not to break with her, and was profoundly relieved when Pagello, who had visited Paris, where he was absolutely out of his element, decided to return to Venice.

belong to any man but you. There is peace of mind for you, so bear any suffering that comes patiently. Remember that I have promised to come back to Venice soon and that you have promised never to doubt me. Your belief in me is my greatest link of solid esteem with you, and my greatest proof of the innate nobility of your soul. Please do continue your evening visits but I think you would do well not to come in the mornings. I will write when I can escape for a few hours to meet you in a gondola. It will not be for two or three days yet. I must first accustom Alfred to seeing me go out, without arousing his suspicion. So let us hope for one or two days of rapture before we part and then let us pray God to make the time go quickly until I can come back to Venice, and let us love one another all the time.

TO ALFRED DE MUSSET

(No letter of George Sand to Alfred de Musset written before their quarrel in Venice has been preserved)

Venice, written in a gondola.

No! Do not rush off like that! You are not well enough to travel yet!

I *will* not allow you to start alone. Oh! my God! Why should we quarrel? Am I not even now your brother—your brother George, the same true friend as ever!

TO ALFRED DE MUSSET

(after he had started back to Paris attended by his valet)

Treviso.

My child, I felt I must follow behind to find out how you are. When I got back to Venice, Pagello was going to escort me to Vicenza to find out how you had

fared on the first stage of your sad journey. But I felt that I could not muster enough resolution to spend the night in the same town as yourself without going to see you and embrace you in the morning. I was dying to do it, but I feared to renew for you all the suffering and emotion of our parting. And then when I reached my lodgings I felt so ill myself that I really feared I should not have the strength for it.

M. Rebizzo came to see me and carried me off almost against my will to spend the night at their house. They were very kind to me and spoke of you with the deepest interest which really did me a little good. I am writing to you now from Treviso. I left Venice this morning at six o'clock. I am bent on reaching Vicenza this evening and mean to go straight to the inn where you slept. I ought to find a letter from Antonio (the valet) there, as I ordered him to leave news of you. I am obliged to stop here for an hour or two because Pagello has a visit to make and begged me to take this route, which, he said, is no longer than the other.

I shall have no peace of mind until this evening and then what kind of peace will it be? Such a long journey and you still so weak! My God! Oh, my God! I shall pray for you from morning till night. I hope God will hear me! I shall find a letter from you at Venice to-morrow. I shall get there almost at the same time as the post. Do not worry about me, as you know I am as tough as a goat! But do not expect me to be either cheerful or placid. I could not achieve either so quickly! My poor angel boy! What sort of night did you have? I hope that you were so tired that you simply had to sleep. Be good and prudent and kind as you promised me. Write to me from every stopping-place or at least make Antonio write, if you find it too much trouble. I shall write to you at Geneva or Turin according to the route you decide to take, and you will let me know that from Milan will you not?

Good-bye, good-bye, my angel. May God protect you, guide you and bring you back here one day if I am here. In any case I shall certainly see you during the children's holidays. What bliss it will be! How we shall love each other, shall we not, my little brother, my child? Oh, who will take care of you now and whom shall I take care of? Who needs me and whom should I care to tend henceforward? How shall I do without the torment and the bliss which are you? Can you forget the suffering I have caused you and remember only our happy hours? They will always leave balm in *my* heart and soothe its smart. Good-bye, my own darling. Always love your poor old George.

TO ALFRED DE MUSSET

Begun April 15th, ended April 17th.

My darling angel, I have been frantically worried because I had not a line from Antonio. I went to Vicenza on purpose to find out how you passed the first night, and all I could learn was that you had passed through the town in the morning. So all the news I had of you was the two lines you wrote me from Padua. Pagello kept telling me that if you had been ill Antonio would certainly have let us know, but I know that letters are always getting lost in this country, or else they are six weeks in the post. I was in despair! At last I got your letter from Geneva. Oh! how I thank you for it, my child. How sweet it is and how it comforted me. Is it really true that you do not feel ill, that you are stronger and not suffering at all? I am always afraid that you exaggerate your well-being out of consideration for me! May God give you back your good health and preserve it, my own dear boy! It is quite as necessary to my happiness as the assurance

of your friendship. I could not hope for a single happy hour without the certainty of both.

Do not think, Oh Alfred, never believe, that I could ever be happy if I had to acknowledge that I have lost your heart. It matters so little whether it was the love of a mistress or a mother. Whether I inspired love in you or friendship; whether I was happy or miserable with you does not affect the present condition of my soul in the least. *I know that I love you and that is everything.*

(Here three lines are crossed out.)

To watch over you and preserve you from all evil and all worry; to surround you with distractions and pleasures, that is my need—that is what I have been regretting ceaselessly since I lost you. Oh, my child! my child! how bitterly I need your tenderness and your forgiveness. Do not speak of forgiveness from me! Never tell me that you have been guilty towards me! I can't remember! I remember nothing now except that we became very unhappy and then parted. But I feel and know that we shall love each other all our lives with the love of the heart, with our minds, and that by means of this holy affection we shall try to heal the wounds which somehow we have dealt each other.

Alas! Can it be called our own fault? No, it cannot. It was written in our destinies, and our characters which are more angular and violent than the ordinary person's, prevented us from accepting life as ordinary lovers do. But be sure that we were born to know each other and love each other. Had it not been for your youth and the weakness that your tears wrought in me one morning we might still be feeling as brother and sister. We were aware that it suited us best; we foresaw the catastrophes which did actually come upon us. Well, what matter after all? We have trodden a thorny path and reached heights where we can repose together. We have been lovers

and we know each other, to the bottom of our souls. All the better. But what discovery did either of us make there which could disenchant us? Oh, what misery we brought upon ourselves by parting in a moment of anger and misunderstandings without trying to explain them away! Then it was that hateful thoughts, capable of poisoning our whole lives, arose; at a moment like that we could believe anything or nothing! But could anything justify us in parting like that? We had tried in vain to part several times before. But did not our hearts give way under their burden of pain and regret as soon as we found ourselves alone, hearts which had been inflamed with pride and resentment while we were together. No, we could not part! Although renouncing relations which had become impossible we were bound for all eternity. How innocently and sincerely we yielded to the impulse which threw us into each others' arms! Have we one memory of the supreme embrace which is not pure and chaste?

One day of fever and delirium you reproached me saying that I had never known how to give you the pleasures of passion. I cried bitterly then over that reproach, but now I am glad that there really was some truth in it. I am well content that your happiness with me was more austere, more restrained than the pleasure you have taken elsewhere.

At least you will never think of me when in some other woman's arms. But when you are alone, when you feel drawn to pray or to weep, you will remember your George, the real companion of your life, your sick-nurse, your friend, something better than all that. For the feeling which unites us is composed of so many elements that it cannot be compared to anything else in the world. The world, indeed, could never understand it. All the better! We will love each other and snap our fingers at public opinion.

Apropos of that I have written you a long letter

describing my walking tour in the Italian Alps which I want to publish in the *Revue*[1] if you have no objection.

I will send it to you and if you find nothing to object to in it, please hand it on to Buloz. If you desire to correct or suppress anything I need not tell you that you have rights of life and death over all my manuscripts past, present, and to come. But if you find it quite unpublishable, throw it into the fire, or put it away in your portfolio. I am sending you a letter I received lately from your mother, and some verses which you left behind in my blotting-book, which I have copied out so that they are not so bulky as they were. What can I tell you of my own position? I am chained by one leg, waiting at Venice for money to take me to Constantinople. But first I want to fulfil my contract with Buloz that is why I am working from morning till night. But I have not touched *André*, for there are very few days when I feel strong and resolute enough to get to work and on those days I applied my energies to my letter about the tour in the Alps. I should so much like to go back there. But then when should I get *André* finished? The Tyrol has filled my head with totally different ideas. I shall certainly go there to sketch out the setting for *Jacques* (tell Buloz that *Jacques* is begun). In the meanwhile I am trying to get back some inclination for work. I smoke pipes forty fathoms long, and I drink twenty-five francs-worth of coffee every day. I live practically a solitary existence. Rebizzo comes to see me for half an hour in the morning and Pagello dines with me, always leaving at eight o'clock. He is very busy with his patients at present and his former mistress has been seized with a vehement recrudescence of her passion for him since she learnt that he has been unfaithful to her. He is so sweet and kind that he cannot find courage to tell her that he does not love her any

[1] Revue des Deux Mondes.

more, but he really ought to because she is a fury and what is more she has been making some terrible scenes.

But who would advise him to be inexorable? Certainly not I. She actually came to ask *me* to reconcile them, and I could not avoid doing it although I felt that I was doing them both an ill service. Pagello is really an angel of virtue and deserves to be happy. That is why I ought *not* to have reconciled him with Arpalice. But it is also why I am going away.

In the meanwhile the pleasantest moments of my day are spent talking with him about you. That man is so sensible and kind and understands my sorrow so well, and has such a pious respect for it. He would never gossip and would have his head cut off to spare me pain. He surrounds me with cares and attentions that I have never before dreamt of receiving. Before I can wish for a thing there it is! He guesses at all the material needs which add to the comfort of my life.

(Here a line is crossed out.)

Already I am obliged to hold my fortress against a number of inquisitive persons who try to besiege me. I do not know why it is ever so, if anyone decides to live in solitude. But intruders are already at my door.

Heaven knows what young noodles have read my novels and discovered that I am in Venice! Now they are all agog to see me and to invite me to their *conversazioni*. I will not hear of such a thing and I enclose myself in my room enveloped in my smoke like a divinity in her cloud. I have one intimate friend who delights me, and whom you too would adore. It is an ordinary starling which Pagello pulled out of his pocket one morning and placed on my shoulder. If you want to know what it is like, imagine to yourself the most insolent, cowardly, greedy, extravagant and mischievous creature in the world! I think the soul of Jean Kreyssler must be re-incarnated in this bird.

He drinks ink, he eats my tobacco out of my pipe when it is lighted, he seems to love tobacco smoke, and whenever I am smoking he bends amorously over the glowing bowl.

He perches on my knee or on my foot while I am working; he snatches everything I want to eat out of my hands. In a word he is a fascinating creature. I am sure he will soon arrive at human speech and will try to call me George.

Adieu, adieu, my own dear boy. Write often I entreat you. Oh! how I wish I could hear that you have arrived safely in Paris and are well. Remember that you promised to take care of yourself. Good-bye, my Alfred. Love your own George.

TO JULES BOUCOIRAN

(who had been her son's tutor)

Venice, 6 *April*, 1834.

My dear boy,

I have received your two bills of exchange on M. Papadopoli and I am much obliged. Now at least I am assured that I shall not have to starve or beg in a foreign land. I should mind the begging most. I shall come to an understanding with Buloz,[1] and his payments will provide for my wants without too much demand on him as I am going to work very hard.

Alfred has started back to Paris but I am staying on here for a time.

He was still very weak for such a long journey. I am not without anxiety as to how he will stand it, but it would have been more harmful to him to stay, and every day spent in trying to get stronger only defeated its object and threw him back, instead of advancing

[1] Her publisher.

his recovery. He has started at last attended by a devoted and very careful servant. The doctor has assured me that there is no fear of chest trouble so long as he takes care of himself, but I do not feel quite happy about it.

We have parted perhaps only a few months, and perhaps for ever. God only knows what will become of my head and heart now. But I feel myself a force, a force for living, working and suffering.

The manuscript of *Lelia* is in the little Boule cabinet. I had indeed promised it to Planche so give him the scrawl however little he may seem to want it now. It is at his service. I am deeply grieved to hear about his eyes. I wish I could tend and console him. You must replace me, please take care of him. Tell him that my friendship for him is unchanged if he should ask you about my feelings towards him. You may as well tell him frankly that I heard something about the affair of his duel with M. de Feuillide, which made me think that he does not discuss me quite as prudently as he might.

Then he printed a few pages in the *Revue*, which made me rather cross. He and I are too seriously-minded, and too truly friends, to expose ourselves to ridiculous interpretations from the public. For no consideration in the world would I have wished that a man I so infinitely esteem, should become the laughing-stock of a populace of artists, green with hate and envy, creatures whom he has so often soundly trounced, who in the chase after their own advantage have sought out every possible and impossible occasion of abusing him and making him suffer. The rôle of deserted lover which these gentlemen have tried to force upon Planche did not suit his character nor the entire regularity of our relations. I have done my utmost to preserve him from this mortifying position by stating openly and he has never, never made love to me. Our affection has always been a quite fraternal

one. All the evil gossip make it incumbent upon us not to meet for a few months, but nothing could shake our mutual devotion. And now instead of seconding my efforts Planche has compromised us both: first by a duel, that he had no personal reasons for provoking, next by lamentations and reproaches, very nice ones it is true, but out of place, and what is worse printed in ten thousand copies.

From so far off and after such tremendous events the little accidents of life get wiped out as the details of a landscape disappear when one is looking at it from a mountain-top. Only the big masses stand out in the haze of distance. Just so do the susceptibilities, the small reproaches, the thousand little torments of daily life fade from my memory now; only the memory of true and serious things stays with me. Planche's friendship and devotion, his inexhaustible kindness to me will remain unalterably in my heart for the rest of my life.

After parting with Alfred whom I accompanied to Vicenza I made a little excursion into the Alps, following the river Brenta. I walked about eight leagues a day and I discovered that it induced a form of fatigue which is very beneficial to me, physically and morally. Tell Buloz that I will do articles on my walking-tour, for the Review. (Revue des Deux Mondes.)

I arrived back in Venice with seven *centimes* in my pocket. Otherwise I should have gone on into the Tyrol, but the necessity of obtaining fresh clothing and money forced me to retrace my steps. In a few days I shall start off again in the same way and I shall return to the pass across the Alps by way of the gorges of the Piave. I can get a long way like that either walking eight or ten leagues a day, or riding a mule, at a cost of five francs a day. I have planned to make Venice my headquarters, but to explore the country alone and in complete liberty. I am beginning to

understand the dialect. When I have explored this province I am going to Constantinople. I shall stay a month there and I shall get to Nohant in time for the summer holidays. After that I shall go to Paris for a while and then I shall return to Venice.

I am terribly grieved at not hearing from Maurice and exceedingly pleased to hear that he is well. His father has let me know that he is working well and that the college authorities are pleased with him. As for you, I have begged you ten times at least to run through his note-books and report to me on them. I suppose I shall have to give that up as you never even mention them, bad boy! I am enchanted to hear that my husband has kept Solange at Nohant. And I am very pleased that Julie should be kept on in that way because otherwise I should have to have paid to board her somewhere. If these arrangements had not been made I should have done my utmost to return to Paris, although I have very little money at my disposal just now for such a long journey. I can therefore stay away until the holidays without the slightest injury to either of my children.

Please never tell me about articles for or against me which are published in the newspapers. Here at least I have the good fortune to be quite a stranger to literature and to treat it solely as a means of earning money. Good-bye, my friend. Best love, and please write about my boy and make him write to me. I must have a letter from him at any price. Have you good news of your mother? You never tell me about yourself. Have you got any pupils and is your business prospering generally? Have you not fallen in love, with some woman, or some science, or some light-o-love? Think sometimes of your old friend who loves you paternally as ever.

G. Sand.

TO ALFRED DE MUSSET

Venice, May, 1834.

My child, I am horribly sad and anxious. I do not know what has happened to Boucoiran, he has not written to me for two months; so all that time I have had no news of my son. My sorrow and anxiety increase daily. I have tried not to ask something of you which I know will be repugnant, but really you would be doing me the greatest service in the world if you would go and see him and let me know if he is well.

My imagination runs away with me at night until I am almost out of my mind and come to believe that he is dead. In addition to that I have the terrible worry of being penniless and of lacking sheer necessities. And all this due to the incredible negligence and apathy of Boucoiran. It is a week ago now that I received a letter from Buloz informing me that he had deposited 500 francs with Boucoiran, so Boucoiran cannot be ill. He must certainly be in love, for he is generally extremely punctilious. But when he has fallen in love it is impossible to make him remember anything. I have known him a long time and before now I have been through the most terrible anxiety about my son, while Boucoiran was entirely engaged with his billing and cooing.[1] Pagello has pawned all his poor goods and chattels on my behalf.

I owe Rebizzo two hundred francs and really cannot borrow any more. Next week I shall really have to tighten my belt and fast, for it is horrible to me to be a receiver of charity.

I should not mind so much if all this were indeed inevitable. But I have worked and earned my pay and would have received it but for the negligence of a friend so that it does make me rather angry to have to wait indefinitely for it and go about begging.

[1] Boucoiran was at an earlier date tutor to Maurice Sand.

I am going to withdraw all my business from Boucoiran because I see this delay in forwarding my money is not just an accident but the result of real forgetfulness. But for that I should not have been living for two dreadful months without one scrap of news of my son. I did write to Papet, but he is perhaps away in the country. Paultre is not a reliable person and I am not intimate enough with Sainte-Beuve to ask him to put himself out to such a point for me.

My brother is absolutely indifferent to anything which concerns me and my husband would be glad if he could hear that I am at my last gasp. As you are leaving Paris I shall have no one to do anything for me there but Planche, if not when I come home, at any rate while I am still away which is the last thing I desire for it will give colour for further lies about our alleged passion.

I am sad and angry to a point which is really indescribable, but you will be able to understand for you have a mother and *you* know what suffering she has had to endure. Good-bye, dear boy. Burn this bad-tempered note and forgive me for writing about my worries, but for God's sake, do go and see my son and then let me know how he is, and whether he even remembers that he has a mother and that he looks like himself. I have terrible dreams when I seem to see his skeleton. . . .

What a life! I am very much tempted to make an end of it—very much tempted. You are kind and you love me, likewise Pietro, but neither of you can prevent me from feeling unhappy. Please also see about the money that at least I may get my debts paid. That would be one sorrow the less. Perhaps after all Boucoiran's letter was lost in the post. In that case he must send off another bill of exchange as quickly as ever he can, drawn on Papadopoli. It is ages ago since I asked him whether my son is getting

on well at college, and whether he had been through Maurice's note-books, but there has never been an answer. You might be kind enough to find that out from Sainte-Beuve who often meets M. Gaillord.

TO ALFRED DE MUSSET

No date or address but this letter must certainly have been written in Paris during the winter 1834-1835.

I was quite sure that these reproaches would come the very day after happiness had been dreamt of and decided upon, and that you would make a crime of something that you had accepted as absolutely my own business. Oh! My God! Have we arrived at that already! All right! Do not let us go any further! Let me go away! I wanted to yesterday. There was an eternal adieu in my soul. Remember your despair and all that you poured out to me about being unable to live without me! And I was silly enough to try and save you again! But you are more impossible than ever to help because no sooner are you satisfied that you turn your anger and despair against poor me! My God! What can *I* do? Oh! my God, sometimes one wishes one were dead! What *do* you want me to do now? I wish I knew. And already you are fulminating with questions, suspicions and recriminations! And why do you ask me about Pagello when I forbade you ever to mention him? What right have you to question me about Venice either? Was I yours in Venice? The very first day I fell ill there, you flew into a bad temper and said that there was nothing so depressing as an ailing woman! And was not that the first day of our rupture? My dear boy! I do not wish to indulge in recriminations but I really must jog your memory, it is so very bad with

regard to *facts*. I do not want to recount your shortcomings but, I must just point out that I never once complained of being torn from my children, my friends, my work and my affections and my duties and carried off three hundred miles from home and there abandoned with such offensive and wounding words, only because, *only* because I had a feverish attack and was out of looks and sadly out of spirits owing to your callousness.

I never complained, I kept back my tears while you were there, and then one evening that I shall never forget in the Danieli Casino, you said these awful words:

"George, I was mistaken, I must ask you to forgive me, but really I do *not* love you!" If I had not been so ill that a doctor was coming to bleed me the next day, I should have gone away at once; but then I reflected that you had no money, I did not know whether you would actually accept money from me, and I would not, could not desert you and leave you alone in a strange country without a farthing. Then we locked the door between our rooms and we tried to regain our former good comradeship like our first days together here, but it was impossible. We were both dispirited.

I said, "Let us go away, I will take you as far as Marseilles!" but you answered, "Yes, I suppose we had better do that, but now we are here I should like to do a little work." Pagello kept coming to attend me in my illness, you never dreamt of being jealous and it certainly never occurred to me to fall in love with him. But if I *had*, will you kindly tell me what right you had left yourself to interfere! You who had called me "ennui personified," "dreamer," "stupid," "pious," and I know not what else! Had you not also said in a rash odious moment—"*We do not love each other, we never did!*" And now you want an hour to hour account of my dealings with Pierre Pagello! And I do not admit your right to ask it of me! I

should be lowering myself if I made a kind of confession like a woman who had betrayed you. Say anything you like for the complete torment of us both, I shall answer nothing but this : I did not care for him at first, and even after you had gone away when I told you that if I did, it was my own secret, and as I was no longer yours I was not obliged to consider you at all, such a quantity of ridiculous and disagreeable situations arose out of his relations with his former mistresses that I hesitated to engage myself in anything whatever connected with him.

Therefore I have been sincere to a degree which I must recall to you and which your own letters attest to the satisfaction of my conscience. In Venice I never allowed you to ask all these details as to whether we kissed each other one day on the eyes or on the forehead, and I forbid you to re-enter a phase of my life which I had a right to veil from you. The time when we re-adopted fraternal relations was genuinely fraternal and now that I am your mistress again you shall not try to tear away those veils in which I have a right to remain shrouded for my own sake and for Pagello's.

Do you think for a moment that if he had ventured to question me about your love I should have answered? But you no longer feel like a brother you say ! Alas ! Why did you not understand my hesitations at resuming that fatal bond ! Did I not foresee all that has happened? Did I not foresee that you would suffer from that past which inspired you like a great poem so long as I refused myself, and which, now that you have recaptured me appears to you as a nightmare? Come, let me go away ! We are going to be more unhappy than ever before. If I am the light woman you *imagine* me to be, why are you frantic to regain possession? I wanted to have done with love. I have suffered so much through it. If only I could be a coquette you would be less unhappy. Then I could

fib cheerfully and say: "I never cared for Pagello and never belonged to him." What should prevent me from doing that? You are in torment because I have been sincere. Then you must see that under these conditions we can never love each other and all renewal of friendship is pure illusion. Oh! my God! what remains of the great beauty of our passion? Neither love nor friendship. Oh! my God.

TO FRANCOIS ROLLINAT

(One of her most intimate and valued friends a young barrister, practising at Chateauroux, the town near Nohant.)

Nohant, 1834.

I have never felt *love* for you of any kind, neither moral nor physical; but from the very first day we met I felt for you one of those rare sympathies, those deep unconquerable attractions which no force can alter, because the more deeply one explores then the more one identifies one's own soul with the being who inspires this attraction, and shares in it.

I never found you superior to myself either mentally or morally, if I had, perhaps I should have regarded you with that glowing enthusiasm which leads to love.

In a way you were worth more than I, because you were younger,[1] because you had lived less than I in torment, because God had set you from the first upon a better more firmly marked road than mine. But you come from His creative hand with the same number of virtues and failings, of great qualities, and of miseries as I did.

I know many men who are superior to you, but I shall never have the same depth of affection (it comes from the depths of my being) for them as I have for

[1] Rollinat was only two years younger than George Sand.

you. I should never be able to walk with any one of them under the stars all night, as I can with you, without feeling one moment of disagreement or antipathy. And yet we often prolonged these walks and talks until dawn and never without awakening an identical transport in the souls of both of us; and did the confession of some misery fall from my lips, it never failed to draw an echo of the same sorrow from yours.

We had for each other the profound indulgence and the almost cowardly tenderness that one feels for oneself. We felt for each other that kind of besotted confidence which one feels for one's own ideas, and we felt that confident pride, that one has in one's personal force, for one another.

We have never *once* quarrelled or disagreed on any subject bad or good. What one suggests is adopted by the other immediately, and not out of complaisance or devotion, but because of necessity and inevitable sympathy.

TO SAINTE-BEUVE

Paris, September, 1834.

My friends,

I have to thank you for your kind offering. I shall send you a copy of *Jacques* as soon as the inflexible Buloz will let me have one. I never caught sight of you the other day; there was a wall of Saint-Simonians between us and yet I had a great deal to tell you. I am grieving to death and I do not know whether I shall be able to get over this fearful crisis of the sixth lustre. Come and see me this evening if you can. I am going away and I would like to say good-bye to you. Bring me some kind words of consolation and friendship.

Yours,

GEORGE SAND.

TO SAINTE-BREUVE

Paris, 28 *November*, 1834.

Do try, my friend, to come and see me to-day. I hope to see you and am writing to make sure. I have no more hope of ending this stormy and cruel love gently.[1] It must be shattered and my heart with it.

I need strength so badly; give me some. But do not try to give me hope any more for that makes me feel worse than anything. Do not get too weary of my despair. It is so crushing that I cannot carry it all.

TO ALFRED DE MUSSET

Paris.

Really I suppose we had better consider our affair as a sort of game! But remember that it is our hearts and our very *lives* that we are playing with! It is not quite such a game as it may appear to be! Shall we go and blow out our brains together at Franchart? It would be the simplest and shortest way out!

TO ALFRED DE MUSSET

1834 *Paris.*

Oh God! Oh God! Have I been reproaching you when you are suffering so! Forgive me, my angel, my beloved, my poor boy, I am suffering so much myself that I do not know which way to turn. I cry out to God and entreat a miracle of Him. But He does not send one. What will become of us? One or the other must find strength either to love enough for *anything* or to forget; and do not deceive yourself, neither of us have the strength for the one or the other! You think you will be able to find that all-conquering love because you find hope every morning after abandoning it every night. You are twenty-three,

[1] The final separation from Alfred de Musset.

Alfred, and I am thirty-one, with so many sorrows, sobs, and heart-breaks behind me! What are you making for? What do you hope from the solitude and exaltation of a grief which is already so piercing! Alas, I am as limp and feeble as a crushed rope. I am stricken down, hanging over my broken-hearted love as over a corpse, suffering too much to revive it or to bury it. And you seem disposed to lash your own grief to further furies. Have you not had enough of it, as it is? I do not think there can be more desperate pain than the grief I feel now.

But you hope on. You may be able to surmount it. Yes, I remember you said that you would engage in a hand to hand fight with it and would either emerge victorious or perish in the attempt. Very well. You are in your twenties, you are a poet, you are in the prime of your strength and beauty. Yes, make the attempt—but as for me I am going to die. Good-bye, good-bye! I do not want to leave you, I do not want to regain you, I want nothing, nothing!

I am beaten to my knees? I only want to be left alone. I want to fall down on the earth and weep and weep! I do not love you, but I adore you for ever. I do not want you but I cannot live without you! Only a thunder bolt from on high could awaken me from my prostration. Good-bye. Go or stay, only *do not* say that I am not suffering. My only love, my life, my flesh, my brother, my very blood, go if you must, but end my life before you go.

TO SAINTE-BEUVE

Nohant, end of 1834.

My very dear friend,

I ought to have written to you sooner but you can well understand that I needed a few days to come to myself again and to reach an understanding of the position this appalling nightmare has led me to. My

awakening here has been fairly tolerable. I have met all my old comrades and found them as good to me as ever, but my worn out heart, alas! is very weary and very jaded! It will not recover easily.

Alfred has sent me a little letter, rather an affectionate one, repenting of his violence. Through it all he has such a kind heart! For all answer I sent him a little leaf from my garden, and he sent me a curl from his hair which I had often asked for before, that is a fortnight ago. And now it is all over.

I never want to see him again. It makes me too miserable. But I shall have to be strong if I am to refuse to receive him because he is sure to demand it of me. He loves me no longer but he is always tender and repentant after he has been nasty. He will want to efface the bitter memory of our last farewell. He will think he is helping me, but he will be mistaken, for I shall find myself loving him again and all my labour in detaching myself, thrown away.

I promise that I will find the strength to avoid him, for I must indeed.

I should like to stay down here a long time but I cannot. M. Dudevant although he is being remarkably *affable*, does not like the extra expense which my arrival entails, and I cannot wait until he requests me to go, all the more because he is ruining himself and will have to close these doors before long. He has very poor abilities, he has made bad speculations, and he is terribly put out about them. I try to inculcate a philosophical outlook in him. That is how I am spending my time.

My daughter Laura[1] has given birth to a little girl and I am the godmother. Dutheil sings and drinks. You have captivated him entirely. He will talk about you all his life and in forty years he will tell his grandchildren that he met M. Sainte-Beuve during his visit to Paris in the year of grace 1834.

[1] Madame Alphonse Fleury whom George Sand called her "daughter."

My state of soul is a suffering one and yet gentle. I dream away whole hours. I feel that I am going to write a sentimental book. I laugh and cry almost simultaneously. My friend how kind you are to me and how very much I appreciate the help and consolation from you and all the kind hearts which love me in spite of all. Be very sure that I can never at any time of my life forget the active and indulgent affection which you have shown for me. If ever you have need of me how happy I shall be!

Adieu, my dear director, write me a little letter to tell me what you wish of me, but if you have any sad news for me about Alfred, if you hear anything unkind that he has said when out of temper, do not tell me. I have suffered quite enough and am quite sufficiently resigned to losing him.

Adieu. I am rather an idiot I suppose, but I shall get over it. I embrace you with all my heart. Are *you* well? Are you happy? Yes, of course, because you are loved. Think of me sometimes and pray God for your poor old friend

GEORGE.

TO ADOLPHE GUÉROULT

(A friend in Paris. After her break with Alfred de Musset)

My dear boy,

Your letter is as dear and as fine as your soul, but I am returning one page which is absurd and really not possible from you to me. No one has any right to address me in any such terms. Criticise my costume in more tactful language and from a different point of view if you must discant on such puerile accessory. But, believe me, it would be better to leave it alone. Read over the lines that I have underlined.

They are of sovereign impertinence. I think you must have been drunk when you wrote them. Don't think I am angry or shall like you the less, but I warn you not to behave so ridiculously twice ; it is not your style at all. As I have known you, you have always shown wonderful tact, and a delicacy of heart which I have been able to appreciate.

As for the rest you are quite right and I am not by any means inclined to uphold a controversy on the subject of the Saint-Simonians. I like them and admire their first eruption into the world. I am only afraid that they will become corrupted by our gross and covetous rationality, not exactly, by corruption, but from sheer weariness in struggling against the stream, or perhaps owing to misdirected zeal. You know that all my judgments go with my sympathies. I have very little sympathy with our civilisation, which is of the type which triumphs in the Orient. I should like to see another established, which would not have Louis-Philippe for patron, or Janin for prime minister. This is a hopeless subject for a quarrel. Don't pay any attention to it and above all never get alarmed at the fits of spleen or bilious irritation that you may find me in.

You are wrong if you think I am a more *exasperated* woman now than I used to be. On the contrary I am less so. I have great men and great thoughts under my eyes. To deny the existence of virtue or the value of work would ill become me now.

My ideas in general proceed from my character. My sex with which I have come to excellent terms in more sense than one, exempts me from making any great efforts to reform the said character. Were I the greatest genius who ever breathed, I should not attempt to change the position of even one straw in the universe, and with the exception of one or two gusts of virile and militant energy which have swept through me, I exist in and easily relapse to a life

entirely of the imagination ; a world of poetry beyond all doctrines and systems.

If I were a young man I would use my sword here and there and devote myself to letters the rest of the time. Not being a young man I must forgo the sword and keep to literature only. The clothes I wear when I sit down to my desk make very little difference to my books I fancy, and my friends I hope are able to give me the same respect whether I appear in a man's waistcoat or a woman's gown.

I never go out dressed as a man without a stick, so you need not be uneasy. My whim for going out occasionally in a seaman's pea-jacket in given circumstances really has not brought any violent revolution into my inner life.

Rest assured, I am not anxious to acquire the dignity of manhood. It seems too laughable to me to be much preferred to the passive rôle of the woman. But I do boast of possessing both to-day and for evermore the superb and entire independence which men alone consider their birthright. I would not advise all women to try and acquire it ; but in my case I would never permit any kind of love-affair to shackle it. I should always hope to make my own conditions, so definite and so harsh that no man would be bold enough or vile enough to accept them.

As you must feel, such considerations are entirely personal, which may leave you doubting or blaming without my taking offence ; but do they admit of serious discussion. No, indeed, they are no more to be reasoned about than hunger which may be appeased and yet breaks out again. Everything points to that. It is useless to discuss the morrow when one is satisfied with the plan for to-day. If we did not believe that a project would last, it would not exist an instant in one's brain. But only God could be sure of its endurance.

Therefore, by all means take me for a man or a

woman just as you like. Duteuil says that I am neither one nor the other, but just a *being*. That seems to imply that my being includes all good and all evil, *ad libitum*.

However that may be, look on me as a friend, brother and sister all in one: a brother to render you those services which one man can perform for another, a sister to listen to and understand the most delicate confidences of your heart.

But tell your friends and acquaintances that it is absolutely useless to develop a desire to kiss me for my black eyes' sake, because I do not give way to kissing more easily in one costume than another!

Good-bye. Do not let us discuss this again. It would be boring and out of place. Let us talk about the world's future and the beauties of Saint-Simonism. as much as you like. I should be so sorry to change anything in your character and I warn you that it would be far more difficult to alter mine.

Yours, with all my heart,

GEORGE.

TO THE COMTESSE D'AGOULT

(Then living with Liszt at Geneva)

Paris, May, 1835.

Beautiful fair-haired Countess! I do not know you personally, but I have heard Franz (Liszt) talk about you, and I have seen you. I think that after that I can tell you not too unreasonably that I like you and that you seem to me the only beautiful, estimable and really noble being which shines in the sphere of patricians. You must indeed have a powerful personality to make me forget that you are a countess.

But at present you are to me the veriest type of a princess of fantasy, an artist, loving and noble in

manners, language and setting, like some king's daughter in the age of Romance. That is what you seem to me, and I want to love you as you are, and for what you are. I call you noble because perfect manners have given you noble ideas, and because, since you are a countess you are by right, amiable, lovely and gentle as the Valentine whom I once imagined as a character for one of my books, but you are more intelligent, indeed you are damnably too much so, and that is the only reproach I have to make you. I make the same complaint of Liszt and indeed of everyone who really attracts me. The number and activity of one's ideas may indeed become an evil. So few ideas are really necessary for the conduct of life, and surely in that theory is to be found the secret of happiness.

I cherish a constant hope of being able to come and visit you, and it is one of the pleasantest projects ever caressed by me. I honestly believe that we should like each other, when we had seen a little more of one another. You are worth far more than I, but you would find out that I have a feeling for everything beautiful and for everything which you possess. My shortcomings are not my fault. I was good grain, but I fell on scanty soil and among stones and the winds dispersed me. But no matter! Don't think that I belong to that unpleasant band who become sour at the sight of another's happiness. Far from it! The other man's happiness makes mine! It reconciles me with Providence and proves to me that He only maltreats His children out of absence of mind. I still understand languages which I myself have used in the past, and if I keep silence sometimes when I am with you, believe me, not one of your words would fall upon an indifferent ear or a sterile heart.

I hear that you want to become an author! Then for Heaven's sake write! If you want to overshadow the fame of Miltiades it ought not to be difficult.

You are young and at the height of your powers, the purity of your judgment is untarnished. Write at once; before reflecting too long! When you have thought over everything you will no longer have any particular taste for anything in particular, you will only write from habit. Write while you still have genius, whilst a divinity dictates to you, not merely memory! I predict a great success for you. God spare you the briars, which guard the flowers of the crown of fame! Why indeed should briars stick to you? You are made of diamond; you are absolutely fresh and brilliant. The passions of hatred and revenge have no more entered your heart than mine, and besides that, your path has never led you through a desert. You should bring yourself forward as well. If notices in the papers are required to get your first book read, I will fill every journal with them. But once it has been read you will need no one's support.

Good-bye. Talk me over by the fire-side. I think of you every day and I am rejoiced to know that you are loved and understood as you deserve to be. Write to me when you have time. It would cast a ray of your happiness into my solitude. If I am sad, it will revive me; if I am gay, it will make me happier still, if I am merely calm which is my most usual frame of mind nowadays, it will give deeper meaning to the whole aspect of life.

Yes, everything that God sends to man is at its own time good for him if he understands that he must accept it. *Man's soul is transformed under the hand of the Great Artist, Who knows how to develop it to its uttermost if only the clay does not resist the hand of the Potter.*

Good-bye, dear Marie. *Ave Maria, gratia plena!*

GEORGE.

TO HER SON MAURICE

(Then aged thirteen)

La Châtre, 3rd January, 1836.

I received your letter, my darling boy, and I see that you understood mine perfectly ; your comparison is a very true one and as you go in for such pretty metaphors we will try to climb the mountain of virtue together. It is a very difficult height to scale, because at every step you meet something which distracts you from the steep and narrow way. That is what I want to tell you about, to teach you that the fault you must above all avoid is an overweening love of self. It is a fault common to us all.

In some people it develops inordinate love of high position, in others the same feeling for money, and in all, my child, it fosters love of the ego. Never has there been an age of such revolting egoism as our own. Fifty years ago it brought about a fierce warfare between justice and cupidity and that war is far from ended, although the covetous have the upper hand for the moment.

When you are older you will read the history of this revolution which you have heard so much about, which gave reason and justice a great move forward. However those who instigated it were not the stronger side and even those who worked the most generously for it were conquered by those who love wealth and pleasure, and who therefore only make use of the great word Republic to make themselves, despots full of vices and whims. These people became the masters because the proletariat is weak through ignorance. Among those who can take its side and help it with their own intellect and enlightenment there is only one in a thousand who prefers the joy of being helpful to that of being rich and overloaded with luxury and amusements. Then you see the smaller class of the

educated will always have the upper hand over the ignorant who form the masses of all nations."

So you can't help seeing the incalculable advantage, of education. Without it one must be a sort of slave since any day you may see a wise, sober, virtuous peasant worthy of all respect, dependent upon another man who may possibly be bad-hearted, brutal, unjust, and a drunkard but can keep the whip-hand over the peasant simply because he has learned to read and write. Then too you must take to heart the idea of the man who has had the advantages of education and yet is none the better for it in his heart and soul. Realise how guilty before God is the man who knowing all the misfortunes and privations of his fellow-men, and being free to consecrate his heart and life to their service, on the contrary, goes quietly to sleep in a soft bed every night after having over-eaten of luxurious food at dinner, saying to himself, "Everything is for the best in the best of all possible worlds; society is perfectly organised. It is just that I should be rich and my neighbours poor. What is mine is mine; thus I must deal out capital punishment to all who take food from me without begging for it hat in hand, and even when they are very polite I must have them turned out brutally if they inconvenience me. This I do because I have the right."

There you have the reasoning of the egoist, the sentiments of an immense army of pitiless hearts and vile souls who are called the *Garde Nationale*. Among these men who defend property at the point of the bayonet there are more fools than villains. In most cases it is merely the result of their anti-liberal education. Their parents and their schoolmasters have told them from the time they learnt their alphabets that the best state of human affairs is that which preserves the property of the individual. While they hear those who give their lives to the cause of the people, called revolutionaries, brigands, and assassins.

It is because I don't want you to become one of these men without a soul or a brain, that I am writing to you privately and *secretly* what I think about it all.

Think it over and let me know whether you really share my views. Tell me if you can feel what it is just to divide the products of the earth so unequally among men : the fruits, the grain, the flocks and herds, materials of all kinds, and above all the gold (that metal which represents all pleasures because little fragments of it can be exchanged for any other property). Tell me in one word whether the division of property is well done when one man has an enormous share, another much less, a third almost nothing, and a fourth, nothing at all !

It seems to me that the earth belongs to God who made it and entrusted it to men as a perpetual home. But it cannot have been part of His plan that some men should be ill with overfeeding and that others should die of starvation. No matter what anyone can say they cannot prevent me from feeling sad and angry when I see a beggar crying at a rich man's door.

But as to the means of changing all this I must write you many more letters and we must have many talks together before I get as far as that. I don't want to teach you too much at once ; you must have time to reflect over each point and to answer in proportion as you agree with me and understand. We will leave it at this to-day : *Self-love must be moderated, limited and directed.* That is to say one must accustom oneself to being happy in the pleasure which costs the least money, and at the same time affords the most pleasure to other people who have no money. You and I will seek that Virtue together and if we cannot quite attain to it, at least we are living by just principles and with good intentions.

I do not conceal and you must have perceived already that the principles I am revealing to you are precisely the opposite of those which are taught you

at school. Schools, inspired always by the spirit of the government in power always profess the reigning principle. If Napoleon were still on the throne, your schoolmasters would preach "Empire and War!" If the Republic were established they would tell you to be a good Republican. You must not take too much notice of the dissertations of your professors, or even of the books they give you which are founded on history. These books are dictated by pedants who are slaves of some power.

Often when reading the history of the great actions of antiquity written by a man of the present day you will see that the heroes are treated as rascals. Your own sense of justice will revise these hypocritical judgments. Read the facts and yourself be the judge of the men who did the deeds. Remember always that from the beginning of time those who have worked for the liberty and honour of their brothers have been great men. Those who have worked for their own fame and personal ambition are the men who have made an unworthy use of their great powers. Those who have only considered their own pleasure are only animals.

But you understand that our correspondence ought to be kept secret and that you must not show it to anyone or ever mention it. I also wish that you should keep it from your father altogether; you know that his opinions are quite different to mine. You ought to listen respectfully to all he tells you, but your conscience is free and you can make your own choice, between his ideas and mine, whichever seem best to you. I shall never ask what he thinks fit to teach you and in the same way you have no right to let him know how I write to you.

So please be careful to leave my letters in your locker at college; I will get Emanuel to send them to you and you can send the answers through him three or four days later. Do you understand? In

this way no one will ever see what we write to each other and we shall not have any set-backs. You will have time to read my letters and to answer them at your leisure. My darling angel, I love you better than anything else in all the world.

I am staying at la Châtre for a while, putting up at Duteuil's.

Good-bye. A thousand kisses. Do learn history. It is so important.

TO FRANCOIS ROLLINAT

(Announcing the result of her application for a legal separation from her husband)

20th February, 1836.

My kind dear friend,

Do not worry any longer. The case is decided for me as favourably as it possibly can be. I have my two children, and what is still better, M. Dudevant who is off his head apparently, is going to appeal at Bourges, thereby risking the loss of his allowance and the privilege of having his son with him half the year, all his advantages in fact. We are awaiting a definite letter from him on this subject, or else his arrival here, to acquiesce in the decision and to ratify the treaty. Whatever happens I shall go and see my children next month and I shall see you as I pass through Chateauroux, and will have a good talk over my own affairs and yours. I wanted to come before to make a determined attack on your condition of melancholy but I have been quite ill with obstinate sore throat and have only been well three days.

Now I am obliged to wait until I see what position the enemy is going to take up. Everything is doing badly for him, especially his own judgment which is feeble, violent and limited and always gives him the wrong advice.

Are you getting the better of yourself? At least I hope your health is in good condition. Always be fond of me and may your affection for me strengthen your courage. You are indeed a part of me and I do not think we could be forcibly divided without seriously damaging my whole existence.

Adieu. Hope to meet soon.

G.

TO THE COMTESSE D'AGOULT

(After George Sand had obtained a legal separation from her husband and had entered into sole possession of Nohant)

Nohant, 20 *August*, 1836.

Whatever happens now and with no pretext for delay less important than my own death I shall be at Geneva one of the first four days of September. I shall leave Nohant on the 28th and shall spend twenty-four hours at Bourges and shall go on by Lyons. The coaches are appalling and very slow. That is why I cannot fix the day of my arrival. Write by return of post to say what hotel I am to go to in Geneva. Letters take four days to reach me. You will just have time to dash me off an answer.

We will do exactly as you like, go where you like, or stay where you like. As long as I am with you I shall be quite content. The only thing is that I must warn you I shall have my two little " incumbrances " with me. If I had waited to come to you until their holidays are over it would have meant six weeks delay, so I mean to bring them. They will be very little trouble, they are really very docile and will have their nurse to take charge of them when you want them out of the way. One room will be enough if Maurice can have a mattress on the floor, my daughter and I can

share a bed. We never have more accommodation in Paris when they both have holidays at once. The nurse can sleep at an inn.

Perhaps you will lend me a corner of your desk when the desire to write seizes me (which seems improbable). If you think you are going to be worried by the large company attached to me, we must all put up at the inn nearest to your establishment. In the meanwhile do tell me where your domicile is situated for I cannot remember, and I just stuck Grande Rue into the address without knowing why.

Good-bye my beloved ones. I shall not recover my spirits (if I have any spirits left) nor begin to believe in the possibility of happiness again, until I am with you.

TO AUGUSTE MARTINEAU-DESCHENEZ

(a friend in Paris)

Nohant, 21 *August*, 1836.

You have heard that my case is ended. I am at Nohant in liberty and security. I won't say any more about my affairs. The newspapers do quite enough reporting of these mortal vexations that I want to forget, and on which I cannot possibly ever touch again, even with my dearest friends.

I quite meant to go up to Paris to fetch home Maurice and to look up my jolly comrades. But the bustle of my disordered business keeps me here longer than I expected. In the meantime Maurice has arrived. And now he is out of gloomy old Paris he has no desire to go back there until the holidays are over. As a distraction from his school-year and from my agonies into which he has entered only too keenly, I am taking both him and Solange to stay with Liszt who is now living in Geneva with a remarkably distinguished

woman, of whom I am very fond, who clings very closely to my friend, the musician. They have been expecting us for a long time.

We shall start on the 28th and we shall all come back to Paris together at the end of the month. Do not tell anyone that I am going to make this excursion. It would only mean that a crowd of unemployed persons would make it a pretext for trying to rout me out either in person or by letter; and I am going to try and forget all about literature on the banks of the lakes.

So I shall see you in October, my dear Benjamine, and if I can manage to abduct you I shall take you down to Nohant for a visit. Poor boy! You are a government official! Therefore you must arrange to have a nice little illness, lungs or abdominal (alleged) as Maurice would say, in order to get an opportunity of breathing the country air under my old walnut-trees and under the paternal wing of your old George.

In the meantime write to me at Geneva, c/o Liszt, Grande Rue, and be as fond of me as I am of you. Adieu.

TO MADEMOISELLE LEROYER DE CHANTEPIE.

(an admirer of her works who had started a correspondence with her)

Mademoiselle,

I know of only one belief and one refuge: faith in God and our immortality. My secret is not new; and *there is no other.*

Love is an awful thing, or at any rate a dangerous experiment! Fame is empty and marriage is odious. Maternity has ineffable rewards, but either through love or marriage it has to be bought at a price which could not take the responsibility of imposing on anyone by my advice. When I am separated from my children whose education keeps them away from me a

good part of the year I seek solitude and I find it, since I have now renounced altogether a great many things which are impossible for me, happiness, which I cannot hope for. I am trying to express this happiness in a poetic form in one of my works to which I am adding a volume: I mean *Lélia* which you have been good enough to judge with indulgence and into which I have put more of myself than in any other book. Since you seem to think that I know more of learning and life than you do I will send you the work as soon as the new edition is out. But I am much afraid that you are mistaken in believing that I have power to cure you. You will find out all that I have found out, yourself, and in that way it will come to you in a form more adapted to your faculties. Always hope! We have periods of trial. But we never are tried beyond our strength. The burden is lightened just as it becomes unbearable. You appear to me to be one of the *chosen vessels*. You should therefore thank God for *being* until gradually you come to learn from Him what He destines you for.

I wish I could be among those who find comfort in ardent prayer and are sure of being heard. I would pray Him to give you happiness or at any rate the calm and resignation which you seem to me born to understand and worthy of possessing.

Believe me yours very sincerely,

GEORGE SAND.

TO HER HUSBAND

Paris, November, 1836.

I am tormented with anxiety about Maurice. Of course I do not tell him so, but he seems to be falling into a condition of nervous exhaustion. He sleeps so lightly, dreaming all the time. A boy of his age ought not to sleep like that. There is no definite suffering yet, but both the doctors who have seen him, the

college doctor and another who comes here as a friend every day, detect the same symptoms of nervous excitement and accelerated beat of the heart.

I don't know how I am to get away. I ought to be at Nohant, but no sooner do I mention my departure than he bursts into tears and his temperature goes up. I have said so much to him about trying to be sensible that he would submit to anything I exact. He says nothing, but he really is ill. I beg you to come to my help. Speak to him tenderly and gently : the child loves his parents equally, but he is fragile both physically and temperamentally and severity simply annihilates him.

The doctors say that he is not to be worried, which is very difficult to carry out. How can one bring up a child without contradicting him at all ? They say that it is only a condition incident to his age, but that a serious illness might develop from it, if he is worried into high fever. And it is a fact that I find him with more palpitation at night than he has had when the doctors have been examining him. I am so afraid that he may be attacked by the malady from which I have suffered all my life and am still troubled with at times. If only I could feel that he has such a good constitution as I have. But it is not so. And grief does him real harm.

I can assure you that it was a great mistake, I will even say a great crime, to tell this child certain facts that he ought never to have known, which at any rate he need only have known partially and understood vaguely. But the harm is done though neither you nor I desired it. In my own case I am conscious of having always encouraged him to share his affection equally between yōu and myself.

Personal dissensions between us simply disappear in a case like this which must take precedence before any other consideration ; it concerns the health of our child. For heaven's sake do not urge him into a

rivalry of affection which would still further excite his hypersensitive nervous system. Just as I encourage his affection for you do not please, discourage his tenderness for me. Come and see him here as much as you like. If it is disagreeable to you to meet me nothing is easier than to avoid it. I don't feel any special repugnance to meeting you. Maurice's condition makes it impossible for me to entertain any consideration but the longing to calm him and to cure his moral and physical weakness.

I shall stay here until he has recovered and I will take no step without your approval. Do support me in this. You love your son as much as I do. Spare him all emotions that he is not strong enough to bear. If I were to tell him evil things of you it would do him a great deal of harm. Let this precaution be reciprocal.

What interest have we now in fighting over the heart of a poor child full of gentleness and love? That would be carrying the war too far and I could never feel hostile to such a point.

A.D.

Maurice knows nothing of my anxiety. He is expecting from day to day to go back to college. Don't mention his palpitations to him. The doctors always tell him it is nothing.

TO THE ABBÉ DE LAMENNAIS

(The great social reformer of that day)

Monsieur and my good friend,

Without knowing it, you have drawn me into a difficult field of action. When I began these *Letters to Marcie*[1] I expected them to appear in a less serious form than that in which they now do appear, in spite of myself because I am at the mercy of the invincible will which governs my poor reflections.

[1] Her contributions to the *Monde* a paper under the direction of Lamennais.

I am feeling rather alarmed about it, because during the few short hours in which I have had the joy of listening to you with the respect and veneration with which my heart is overflowing, I have never dreamed of asking your opinion on the questions which are confronting me always.

In the course of the religious and political preoccupations which fill your intellectual activities, I do not even know that you have given any consideration to present conditions of women's existence. The most curious thing to me is the fact that though I have written upon that subject throughout my literary career I hardly know what by own opinion is. Never having summed up my own convictions, and never having arrived at any but very vague conclusions I have formed a habit of depending on inspiration without definitely knowing the source of it and being absolutely uncertain whether I am mistaken or not, and yet unable to prevent myself from coming to these conclusions because I feel within myself an indescribable certainty which is perhaps the voice of Truth, and perhaps the only impertinent voice of pride.

However, I have embarked upon this subject and I feel that I want to extend the scope of *Letters to Marcie* as long as I can bring in questions pertaining to women. I want to touch upon all their duties, on marriage and maternity, etc. On some of these subjects I am afraid of being carried away by my natural petulance, carried further indeed, than you would permit me to go if I could consult you in advance. But time is lacking for a consultation with you whenever I write a page, and would like your guidance. Would you have time either to supplement my ignorance? No! The paper must go to press and I am sure to be overwhelmed with a thousand other cares, and when in the evening I have an hour to think over my *Marcie* letter, I have got to write something, not to sit thinking about it!

After all I am perhaps incapable of deeper reflection on any subject and certain it is that whenever I do have a good idea (and I ought to admit that is not often) it simply falls from the clouds when I least expect it. What shall I do? Shall I go by my impulses? Or dare I ask you to cast an eye over the wretched stuff which I send to the paper? This last idea has many objections. Corrected stuff never has unity. It loses its general form and logic. It has often happened that a whole house has fallen down because a corner of the wall was repaired, and if it had never been touched, nothing would have happened.

In order to obviate all these inconveniences we must agree upon two points and they are that I must confess here to the principal audacities which pass through my mind, and that you will authorise me to write freely without taking much notice if I am foolish in detail. I do not know how far the public would hold you responsible and moreover I believe that you are little concerned with public opinion. But I have so much deep affection for you and I feel such utter confidence in your opinion, that even if I felt certain that I had written nothing objectionable I would submit to your censorship in order to earn the privilege of shaking you by the hand.

To confess my chief audacity briefly, I want divorce established in marriage. Search as I may for the remedies to sore injustice, endless misery, and the incurable passions which trouble the union of the sexes, I can see *no* remedy but the power of breaking and reforming the marriage bond. Of course I do not consider that it ought to be done lightly, and without less reason than those which already make a legal separation possible.

Although for my part, I would rather pass the rest of my life in a dungeon than marry again, I know of love outside marriage which is so lasting, so imperious that nothing even in the ancient civil and religious law

can make the bond more solid. And this is without considering that affections become stronger and more worthy of interest in proportion as the human mind becomes elevated and purified.

It is certain that in the past, these passions have remained enchained and the social order has suffered thereby. This disorder has been so largely created by vice and corruption that it proves nothing against the law. But great souls, great characters, hearts full of faith and kindness have been dominated by passions which might have descended straight from heaven. How is that to be answered? And how is one to write about women without arguing the vital questions of their lives?

Believe me in this matter I know better than you and for once the disciple will venture to say:

"Master, there are roads which you have never trodden, gulfs which you have not measured; you have lived with angels, but I have lived with men and women. I know how much human beings suffer, how deeply they sin, I know how great is the need of a law which makes virtue *possible*."

If you will trust me you will find that no one will seek this law with a truer desire of finding it nor with a more sincere respect for goodness or from a more impersonal standpoint; for I never seek to palliate my past errors and my increasing years allow me to view the storms which are quivering and dying away on my horizon with a quiet eye.

Answer me briefly. If you forbid me to go forward on these lines I will conclude the *Letters to Marcie* at the point they have reached and I will turn to some other task which you may appoint. I am able to keep my own counsel on many subjects and I do not feel any vocation as a reformer of the world. Adieu my father and friend, no one loves and respects you more than I do.

G. Sand.

TO THE COMTESSE D'AGOULT

Nohant, May, 1837.

From all I can see in the newspapers Liszt is simply bathed in a cloud of glory. *Evviva!*

That adds nothing to my knowledge of his genius which I am proud to say I recognised long before the press put its trumpet to its lips. Our friend has at last made it feel the bit and the bridle. It is a victory which is "more necessary than agreeable," as M. Harel says. You must be bounding about like a gazelle, to bring the dazzle of your fair hair to an unlimited number of concerts.

Does not your health suffer from this life of emotion and triumph? As I am so tough I envy you your joy and the flood of melody that you must be drowned in (Prudhomme's style). But I am nearly penniless and I am obliged to limit myself to the music of the frogs in my garden, who during the past few nights have poured out very charming notes for provincials. For the rest you will find your room untouched, not even a match has been moved. Nohant and the Piffoël[1] family are the most imperturbable things in the universe.

Good-night, dear Mirabella. If you should have an opportunity to pull the *ragozzo di rosa's* clumsy ear[2] you would do me a great pleasure. I salute the master and you also with all my heart.

TO GUSTAVE PAPET

(A friend at Ars)

Fontainebleau, 24 *August*, 1837.

Dear old friend,

I have lost my poor mother. She died very quietly and peacefully without the slightest pain or effort and

[1] Piffoël is a name George Sand gives herself in her dairy.
[2] A pupil of Liszt's called Hermann.

quite unconscious that it was the end, thinking that she was going to sleep for a little while and would wake up again. You know that she was very much concerned about being spotless and dainty; her very last words were "Please tidy my hair."

Poor little woman? She was refined, intelligent quite artistic and generous; quick to take offence in small things, large-minded in great ones. She made me suffer a great deal and my greatest troubles came through her. But she made up for it towards the last and I had the satisfaction of perceiving that she had at last come to understand my character and to do me complete justice. I am conscious of having done my duty by her.

I can now say that I have no relations left. Heaven has repaid itself by taking away some of the dearest friends that anyone ever had. That possession has been the only real happiness of my life. It is constantly stated that my friends have been ungrateful and false, but I positively contradict such an assertion, for if any of my friends did prove to be of that quality I have forgotten all about them in the consolations afforded by the others.

I am enchanted at having Maurice with me. When I came back I joined him at Fontainebleau where we are hidden away tête-â-tête in a charming little inn which looks out over the forest. We ride horses or donkeys every day, we are taking the baths and we go out butterfly hunting. I am not sorry that he should have holidays. When our funds are exhausted (which will happen before long) and when I have finished my business in Paris where I shall stay about three days we shall go into the country again. Write to me here. Embrace your father for me, and love me always as your old mother, sister and chum. Maurice sends you a thousand kisses.

GEORGE.

TO COMTE ALBERT GRYZMALA

(An intimate friend of Chopin. George Sand had been meeting Chopin frequently during the spring. Hence this letter.)

Paris, May, 1838.

I could never doubt the genuine quality of your advice, my dear friend, so you must never dream of such a thing. I believe in your gospel without being familiar with it and without examining it because it must be the most sublime of all gospels if it can claim an adept like yourself. Believe yourself blessed for your advice and always safe in my thoughts. Weigh the question definitely for the last time because my conduct for the future will depend on your last answer on this subject; and it had to be threshed out I am sorry that I could not overcome the repugnance to questioning you that I felt in Paris. I was so afraid that you would say something to blur my dream, my poem that I am living! And indeed even as I write it grows dimmer. But what does it matter? Your gospel is the same as my own in so far as it commands us to consider oneself last and not to consider oneself at all when the happiness of those we love constrains us to be strong. Listen attentively and answer clearly, categorically and definitely. Is this person whom he wants to try and love or thinks he is bound to love the right person to make him happy, or would she only add to his sorrows and sufferings?[1] I do not ask whether he loves her or whether she loves him, less or more than I do. I know more or less what must be going on within his soul by what is going on in mine. But I do demand to know *which* of *us two* he ought to forget or abandon for the good of his own well-being, in order not to shorten his life in fact, for he seems to me too fragile to be able to endure

[1] George Sand evidently had not heard that Chopin's engagement to Marie Wodzinska had been broken off by her family.

great griefs. I do not want to be forced into the position of bad angel. I am not Meyerbeer's *Bertram* and I will not wage war on the friend of his childhood if she is a pure and lovely *Alice*. If I had known that there was a tie in the life of your adored young friend, an affection in his soul, I should never have drawn near enough to breathe the perfume reserved for another altar. At the same time he too no doubt would have withdrawn from our first kiss if he had understood that I am as good as married. We did not deceive one another; we simply yielded to the blast which rushed by carrying us both to some other than earthly region for a few moments. But it was none the less necessary to alight on solid ground again after the heavenly meeting of our lips and that flight to the empyrean. We poor birds have wings, but our nests are on the ground, and when the voices of the angelic host call us aloft, the cries of our families tie us to earth.

I have no wish to abandon myself to passion although there is still a furnace smouldering in my heart which at times is very threatening. My children give me the strength to break with anything which would separate me from them or compel me to abandon the mode of life which is most desirable in the interests of their education, health and general well-being. You see I cannot settle in Paris at present because of Maurice's health, etc., etc.

And then there is one who is so good, so *perfect* in heart and in honour that I will never break with him,[1] because he is the only man who has been my lover for a year without causing me any suffering by his own conduct for one minute. He is also the only man who gave himself to me absolutely and entirely without regret for the past or reservations for the future. Then he is by nature so good, and so wise that in time

[1] This was Mallefille, her son's tutor, and she broke with him a few weeks after writing this.

I shall be able to bring him to understand and know unlimited things. He is like wax under the impress of my seal and when I want to change the impression with patience and caution I can always succeed. But I cannot do that in this case and I am bound to consider his happiness as sacred.

That is my side of the question, tied as I am, really chained up tight for the next few years I cannot very well desire our young friend to break any chains which hold him. If he were to put his existence into my hands I should be much alarmed ; for having accepted the care of another's life I could not fill the whole place that Chopin would be offering me. I feel that his love and mine could only endure in the conditions which gave it birth, that is to say, from time to time when a favourable wind approached us one to the other we would mount up once more to the stars, and then when our feet touched earth again we should have to separate, for we *are* children of the earth and God has not destined us to walk side by side upon it. We can only meet in a more heavenly sphere and a few rapid instants there would be so marvellous that they would be worth a whole life-time here below.

My duty then, is clearly marked out and without abjuring it I can quite well carry it out in two different ways : one would be to keep away as much as possible from Chopin, not to try to occupy his thoughts and to take care never to be alone with him. The other way would be to see as much of him as possible without endangering Mallefille's peace of mind ; to remind him gently of my existence in his hours of peace and beatitude, and from time to time when the breath of heaven blows to raise us to aërial spheres, to embrace him in pure friendship. I will adopt the first method if I hear from you that the *person* I spoke of is formed to give him pure and true happiness, to surround him with watchful attentions, to organise, regularise and calm his life ; if in fact it is a question

or my being an obstacle to his happiness with her. If his soul, perhaps *excessively* and perhaps *madly* and perhaps *wisely* scrupulous, utterly refuses to love two utterly different beings in utterly different ways; if the week I spend with him during the season prevents him from being happy in his home-life for the rest of the year, then I swear that I will try to make him forget me. I will adopt the second method if you tell me one of two things; either that his domestic happiness may best be found in a few hours of passion which is pure poetry at intervals; or, that marriage (or any union resembling it) would be the grave of his artist-soul, which he must be rescued from at any price while he must be helped to overcome his religious scruples. That is where my conjectures come to an end. You must tell me where I am mistaken. I must believe the *person* in question to be charming and worthy of love and respect because a being like him could only love what is pure and beautiful. But I believe you dread marriage for him; you dread the daily tie, the humdrum everyday life, the business, the domestic cares, everything which in a word, seem far removed from his nature and in opposition to the inspiration of his Muse. I also dread it for him but in that respect I can make no report or pronouncement as there are many aspects of him of which I have absolutely no knowledge. I have only seen that facet of his being which is illuminated by the sun. You must give my opinions some positive foundations in this respect. It is of the highest importance that I should know his position in order to decide on my own. To please my own taste I had visualised our *poem* (his and mine) so that I knew nothing, absolutely nothing of his *positive* life, nor he of mine, so that he should pursue all his religious, mundane, poetical and artistic ideas without my ever daring to ask an account of them, and I wanted him to feel the same about mine; but it would be a necessary condition

that no matter where we met, or at what period of our lives, our souls would be at their zeniths of happiness and beautiful existence when we did meet. *For there is no doubt about it* that we are the better in our souls for a sublime love, and that far from it being possible for such a passion to be criminal, it brings us close to God, the source and radiating fire of that very love. As a last resort you should try and make him understand that, my friend, and if you can do it without offending his notions of religion and sacrifice, you will perhaps set his heart more at ease. What I should fear more than anything else would be the thought that I could possibly bring remorse to his soul, that would pain me unbearably and I would die for him rather than that. No (unless she were really to prove an evil in his life) I could not bring myself to fight down the image and memory of another. I have too much respect for property to do that; or I should say that love in the only form of proprietorship which I do respect. I will never steal anyone from anyone, except that I would snatch prisoners from their goalers and the condemned from their executioners, and Poland from Russia; but that goes without saying. Tell me if it is a "Russia" personality which is obsessing Chopin's imagination because if so I should pray to heaven for all the seductive power of Armida to prevent him from getting into her power; but if she is of the "Poland" type I will allow it to go on. There is nothing like one's own country and if we have a country we should not try to belong to another. In that case I ought to become his *Italy* which one visits and enjoys for a few days in the spring, but one does not settle there because there is more sunshine there than household furniture, and the comforts of life belong elsewhere. Poor Italy! The whole world dreams of it, desires it or regrets it, but no one stays there because it is an unhappy place and cannot give out happiness because it has none to give.

There is one last supposition which it would be as well for me to bring forward. It is more than possible that he does not care for this friend of his childhood any longer than that he has a real repugnance to the bond, but that, dutiful regard for the honour of his family is pushing him to rigorous self-sacrifice. In that case my friend you must be his good angel, I could hardly mix myself up in it, but you could do it. Save him from being too conscientious, prevent him at all costs from immolating himself, for in these matters (I mean marriages or unions which without having the same publicity have the same force and enduring power) in these matters I say, the sacrifice of the one who gives up his whole future is not in proportion to anything which he may have received in the past. The past is a limited and appreciable thing; the future is infinite because it is unknown. The being who demands the devotion of one's whole future existence in return for a certain known quantity of devotion is making a unique demand, and anyone of whom it is demanded finds himself much embarrassed by the necessity of defending his rights and of satisfying the claims of justice and generosity at the same time. It is for his friends to save him from this dilemma and to be the absolute judge of his rights and duties. Be firm in this respect and be very sure that I who detest seducers and always take the part of outraged women, I, who always figure as an advocate of my own sex and pique myself upon appearing for women and their cause, have nevertheless broken off more than one engagement of this type, by my authority as quondam mother, or sister, or friend. I have always condemned women when they try to be happy at a man's expense. I have always absolved the man, when more has been demanded of him than it is possible for human dignity and freedom to engage in. A vow of love and fidelity becomes a crime or a bit of cowardice, when lips pronounce what the heart

disavows, and one may exact anything of a man except an act of cowardice or a crime. But unless you think that he would be making too severe a sacrifice, my friend, I think it would be better not to combat his ideas or do violence to his instincts. If, like mine, his heart could contain two very different loves at once, *one*, which so to speak is the *body* of his life, and the other, the *soul*, it would really be the best solution because then our situation would answer to our thoughts and feelings. Just as one is not at one's sublime pitch every day, so one is not at one's happiest every day. We should not see each other every day, we should not be inspired with the divine fire every day but beautiful days and sacred flames would appear from time to time. We should perhaps consider the subject of letting him know my position with regard to Mallefille? It is to be feared that not knowing it he may be creating a sense of obligation towards me which worries him and wages a painful warfare against the *other*. I leave you to be the absolute arbiter of this question. You must tell him if you think it would be well to do so, but delay it if you think it would only add to the too recent sufferings he has gone through. Perhaps you have already told him. But I approve everything that you have already done or are going to do.

As for the question of possession or refraining from possession it has always seemed to me of secondary importance compared with the question before us. It is however, an important question in itself; it is the greater part of a woman's existence, her dearest secret, and her most deeply studied theory, her most mysterious coquetry. Now, my friend and brother, I will tell you my solution of the mystery, which provokes the strangest suppositions from anyone who mentions my name. My solution is simply that I have no secret, nor theory, nor doctrines, nor definite opinion; I have adopted no particular side, no

pretensions to special powers or the monkey-tricks of spiritualism, in fact in my case nothing is arranged in advance, I have no habits and I believe, no false principles, either of licence or of abstinence.

I have trusted implicitly to my instincts which are always noble. I have sometimes made mistakes about other people, but never about myself. I must indeed reproach myself with a good deal of foolishness, but not with platitudes or mischievous actions. I hear a great deal said about human morality, modesty and social virtue. All that is yet to be disentangled as far as I am concerned. I have never come to any conclusion about it all. I confess that the desire to make a theory agree with my feelings has always been the great effort and great mortification of my life. My feelings have always been stronger than reason, and the limits that I have tried to impose upon myself have never been of the slightest use. I have changed my opinions I don't know how many times. Above all I believe in fidelity. I have preached it and practised it and exacted it. People have failed in fidelity to me and I myself have failed in it. And yet I have never felt remorse because I always discerned a sort of fatality in my own infidelities; an instinct of straining up to the ideal which urged me to leave the imperfect and pursue my search for perfection. I have known many sorts of love: the love of an artist, a wife, a sister, a mother, a nun, a poet and how many more? I have known loves which were born and died in one day without ever having been revealed to the object of it. There have been loves in my life which have made a martyr of me and have urged me to despair and almost to madness. There have been others which have cloistered me for years in excessive spirituality. They have all been perfectly sincere. My being entered into all these different spheres as Saint-Beuve expresses it like the sun entering the different signs of the Zodiac. Watching from outside

there are many spectators who may have said they thought me crazy or hypocritical, but to anyone who can read deeply into my soul I must have seemed to be what I am indeed, a seeker after the ideal, famishing for truth, very sensitive in heart, very feeble in judgment, often absurd, always of good faith, never small nor vindictive, rather bad-tempered and thanks to God absolutely unnoticing of evil things and evil people.

That, my friend, has been my life. You can see that it is nothing to boast of. There is nothing to admire and much to complain of, but nothing that kind hearts can condemn. Those who accuse me of having been a bad woman are liars and it would be quite easy for me to prove it if I wanted to give myself the trouble of remembering and relating a great many things. But that would bore me and my memory is no keener than my powers of being vindictive.

Up to now I have always been faithful to those I loved; perfectly faithful in the sense that I have never deceived a lover and that I never broke away from my fidelity without some strong reasons which killed my love by the other's fault. I am not inconstant by nature. On the contrary, I am so much disposed by nature to love exclusively anyone who loves me truly, I am so difficult to inflame, and so accustomed to living among men without remembering that I am a woman, that I was really a little confused and dismayed by the effect of this being[1] upon me. I have not yet got over my astonishment, and if I were very proud I should be rather humiliated at having plunged into an infidelity at the very moment of my life when the whole question for once seemed settled. I think it would have shown heartlessness in me if I had been able to foresee and combat and reason against this eruption; but it was so sudden an invasion, and it is not in my nature to govern my life by reason when love takes possession of it. Therefore I cannot

[1] Chopin.

reproach myself, but I do admit that I am still very impressionable and weaker than I thought. However, it does not matter as I have so little vanity, but this last incident proves to me that I must give up having any vanity at all, and must never boast of any kind of valiance or force. That does grieve me because I see that my precious sincerity which I had practised so long and of which I was so proud is stained and compromised. I shall soon find myself obliged to be a liar like other people. I assure you, that in itself, is more mortifying to me than having written a bad novel, or having a play hissed off the stage. I do feel it very much and the last of my pride makes itself felt in that suffering. Perhaps it is a voice from on high which is warning me that I must be more careful than ever in guarding my eyes and ears and above all my heart. But if Heaven desires us to be faithful to earthly affections why does it sometimes allow angels to wander here among us and to cross our path?

Thus the great question in love has arisen with me. No love without fidelity I should certainly have said two months ago! but it is certain that I did not feel so tenderly to poor Mallefille when we met again. It is certain that since he went back to Paris (you must have seen him) instead of expecting him back impatiently and feeling sad because he is away I suffer less and feel a species of relief. If I thought that meeting Chopin often would increase this cooling off I should be sure that I ought to avoid Chopin.

That is the point that I have been wanting to arrive at, the question of possession, which to some minds is the whole meaning of fidelity in love. That to me is a false idea; there are degrees of infidelity *but* when we have allowed our souls to be invaded by a new love, when we have given the first slight caress *as a lover*, the infidelity is *morally consummated*, and the rest cannot add much to the all-important fact of the soul's defection. When one has lost one's heart, all is lost.

It is surely better to betray physically and be faithful in one's soul. Thus, in principle I do not think that complete consecration of the new bond can aggravate the matter very greatly, but of course it is a fact that the passion may become more human, more violent, more dominating after possession has taken place. Indeed, it is probable. One may even say it is certain. That is why when two people decide to live together they had better not try to outrage nature and truth by recoiling from complete union; but when lovers are forced to live apart no doubt it is prudent to practice abstinence, prudent, and thus a part of real virtue, that is sacrifice. I shall abide by your advice, dear friend. May my sacrifice be a sort of expiation for the perjury that I have been obliged to commit.

I say sacrifice because it would be very painful to me to see the angel suffer. So far he has been strong, but I am not a mere girl. I could see that human passion had made great strides in him, and that the time had come for us to separate. That is why I did not want to be long with him the night before my departure, and I almost sent you two away, you remember.

And as I am being absolutely frank with you I must admit that one thing does not quite please me in Chopin; and that is that his own reasons for abstaining are bad ones. Up to this point I have thought it fine of him to do it from respect for me, from shyness, and fidelity to his old flame. All that involved sacrifice and in consequence meant strength and real chastity. That charmed and fascinated me in him more than anything. But as we were saying good-bye at your house and he was overcoming a last temptation he said a few words which I cannot agree with. Like some pious fanatic he seemed to be looking down on human grossness and to be blushing for the temptations that he may have, to be fearing that they would soil our love.

That way of looking upon the supreme embrace of love and passion has always been repellent to me. If the sumpreme embrace is not something as pure and holy and as instinct with devotion as the rest, there is no virtue in abstaining from it. The term, physical love, for expressing something which is nameless except in heaven has always displeased and shocked me as something at once impious and false. For elevated natures is it possible that a purely physical love can exist, and for sincere natures is a purely intellectual love possible? Can *love* ever exist without one kiss, and has a kiss of love ever existed which has no trace of passion? To *scorn the flesh* can only be desirable for those who are fleshy and nothing else, but when one loves, to *respect* not *scorn* is the word to use when abstaining.

But that is not quite how he expressed himself. I do not exactly remember the words he used. I think he said that *certain facts* might spoil our memories. Wasn't that a stupid thing to say? I know he did not mean it. Who is the unhappy woman who left him with such impressions of physical love? He must have had a mistress unworthy of him. Poor angel! Women who degrade in men's eyes the divine mystery, the loveliest and holiest thing in creation ought to be hanged. It is of all vital acts the most serious and sublime in the life of the universe. The magnet attracts iron inexorably, the animals seek each other out, in obedience to the law of sex. Even vegetable life knows this law of attraction, and man, who alone in the whole terrestial world has received from God the gift of feeling divinely what the animal, vegetable and mineral world only feel materially, man in whom the electrical attraction is transformed to a consciousness in his intelligence, felt and understood, man alone, I say, takes upon himself to regard this miracle which is simultaneously accomplished in his body and soul as a miserable necessity, speaking of it

with scorn, irony and shame! It is very strange And this way of separating spirit and flesh has simply resulted in the establishment of monasteries and of prostitution.

This is a terrific letter. It will take you at least six weeks to decipher it. It is my *ultimatum*. If he is happy or should be happy with her, let him be. If he will be unhappy with her, *part them*. If he can be happy with me without breaking with her I can put up with that state of affairs. If he can only be happy with me and unhappy with her at the same time we must avoid each other and forget. There is no getting away from these four points. I shall be strong in any case, I promise you, for it is *his* happiness that matters and if I have no great virtue in myself I have at any rate passionate devotion to those I love. You must tell me the plain truth. I count on it and I am awaiting it impatiently. It will be useless for you to put me off with a perfunctory answer. We are far beyond that, M. and myself I mean. We respect each other too much to dream of demanding detailed accounts of each other's lives, even in thought. . . .

There has been some talk of my going to Paris and it is possible that if the business Mallefille is looking after for me, is prolonged I shall have to join him there. Don't tell *him* (Chopin). If I go I will let you know and we will give him a surprise. In any case as it takes you a long time to get permission to move, please begin taking steps with the authorities, as I must have you at Nohant this summer, as soon as possible and for as long as possible. You will see that you can enjoy yourself here very much; there is not a hint of anything you dread. No *espionnage*, no gossip, no provincial ways; it is an oasis in the desert. There is not one soul in the department who has any idea what a Chopin or a Gryzmala can be! No one knows what goes on in my house! I only have *intimate* friends with me, angels like you, who have

never had one evil thought of those whom they love. You will come, dear old boy, and we will have long talks and your shattered soul will revive in the peace of the country. As for *him*, he must come if he would like to, but in that case I want to be told beforehand as I should then send Mallefille either to Paris or Geneva. Pretexts will be easy to find and he never has a suspicion. If *he* does not want to come, don't try to persuade him. He dreads strangers and he dreads Heaven knows what! In beings whom I adore I respect everything that I cannot understand. I shall go up to Paris in September before everyone goes back, and I shall behave to him according to the advice that you give me, when you reply. If you cannot supply the solutions to my problems, try to get them from him. Search out his very soul, for I *must* know what is going on.

But now you know me to the bottom. I only write a letter like this one, perhaps twice in ten years. I am lazy and I hate talking about myself. But this will avoid the necessity of any more talk on the subject. You know me by heart now and you will be able to docket me at sight if required on Judgment-day.

Yours, dear old friend, with all my heart. If in this long conversation on paper I have not mentioned you it is because I feel that in you I am talking to a second self, the best and dearest of the two beyond all doubt.

GEORGE SAND.

TO MADAME MARLIANI

(A Spanish friend in Paris. By this time Chopin had decided to go to Mallorca with George Sand for the winter)

Perpignan, November, 1838.

My dear good friend,

In two hours I shall be quitting French soil. I am writing to you beside the purest, bluest, smoothest sea

that you could imagine. You would say that it was the sea in which lie the Grecian isles, or a Swiss lake on a magnificent day. We are *all* quite well. Chopin arrived yesterday from Perpignan, fresh as a rose and rosy as a turnip, and very well altogether, having stood the journey of four nights in a post-chaise like a hero. As for ourselves we travelled slowly, peacefully, and surrounded at all the stations by a crowd of friends who simply smothered us with attentions.

M. Ferraris, on the recommendation of Manoël[1] was very amiable to me and seemed to be an excellent man and absolutely in the same position as Manoël with regard to nationality. Driven out of Venice and Trieste by the Austrian government, he is awaiting destitution in the most philosophical manner, for at Perpignan he is bored enough to swallow his own tongue. He has kept a very pleasant memory of your husband and learnt from me with joy that he is happy in his household and in love with his wife.

You must have received my letter and a basket of grapes from me sent from Nîmes. I have received nothing from you and I should be uneasy if I had not had news of you from Chopin.

There are the happiest auguries for our voyage as people say : the sky is superb, the weather hot and the only thing lacking for complete contentment is yourself.

Good-bye, dear. A thousand good wishes to Marliani and an affectionate hand-shake for Enrico. Remember me to all our kind friends and give them my news. I shall spend a week at Barcelona. Tell Valdemosa that I am travelling with his friend who is a charming boy. Good-bye, dear friend. Good-bye. Love me as I love you from the bottom of my heart and dear Manoël too.

GEORGE.

[1] Monsieur Marliani.

PORTRAIT OF CHOPIN

Painter Unknown

By permission of M. Alfred Cortot, the Owner

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TO THE SAME

Palma, Mallorca,
14 *November*, 1838.

Dear Friend,

I am writing to you in great haste; I am leaving this town and going to instal myself in the country. There I have taken a pretty furnished villa in a magnificent situation with a garden, for fifty francs a month. What is more, I have also taken a *cell*, two miles away, that is to say, three rooms and a garden full of oranges and lemons for thirty-five francs a *year* in the great Carthusian monastery of Valdemosa. It is poetry, solitude, it is everything that is artistic and also dainty to the highest degree, that I have ever come across, and what a sky! what a country! We are ravished by it all.

We have had some little trouble in settling ourselves in and I do not advise anyone to attempt it in a country like this without announcing themselves at least six months in advance. We have been favoured by a unique concatenation of circumstances. If another family were to arrive after us, I believe they would not find anywhere to lay their heads; for nothing is to be hired, borrowed or sold here. Everything has to be ordered some time beforehand, and every order is very slowly carried out. If one wishes to afford oneself the luxury of a necessary utensil one is obliged to write to Barcelona for it. Valdemosa[1] was bluffing horribly when he described the facilities and comforts of his country. But the country, nature, trees, skies, sea and the ancient buildings all surpass my dreams; it is a promised land and as we have succeeded fairly well in establishing ourselves we are enchanted.

Finally our voyage was the happiest and most agreeable that you can imagine and as I calculated when I

[1] Chopin's friend.

was planning it out with Manoël I have not spent as much as fifteen hundred francs since my departure from Paris. The peasants of the district are excellent people but rather a nuisance. However Valdemosa's sister and brother-in-law are charming and the French consul is a very nice boy who has taken no end of trouble for us.

Good-bye dear. I will write a longer letter another time. To-day I am crushed by the bustle of moving into our country villa. I love you both and embrace you with all my heart. Good-bye once more. Write soon.

TO THE SAME

Palma, Mallorca,
14th December, 1838.

Dear Friend,

You must be thinking me very idle. I too might complain of the scarcity of your letters, if I did not know by this time how business is carried on in this country. You people would never believe it. I laugh when I think of good old Manoël imagining that the post to Paris would only take a week. In the first place you must understand that the principal object of the steam-boat between Palma and Barcelona is the transportation of pigs. The passengers are a secondary consideration. The post does not count at all. What do politics or the arts matter to the Majorcans? The pig is the great, indeed the sole business of their lives. The steam-boat is supposed to run every week, but in reality it only goes when the weather is perfectly fine and the sea as smooth as glass. The slightest breeze makes the captain put back to port even if they are already half-way. Why? Not because they are not capable navigators, but because pigs have delicate digestions; they are afraid of sea-sickness. Now if a pig should die "en route," the

boat goes into mourning and sends papers, passengers, parcels and letters to the devil. The boat has been in harbour now for more than a fortnight and *Spiridion* has been in the post for twenty-five days or more, and I don't know whether Buloz has received it or ever will receive it.

There are other reasons for delay which I do not mention because all reflections upon the post and the business of this country are useless to say the least of it. You may guess them and pass on the information to Buloz. I even beg you to interview him on the subject for he must be falling into paroxysms of terror and despair. The continuity of *Spiridion* must have been delayed for ages. I can do nothing about that. I have abused the country, the weather, the customs and the pigs. I have even abused dear Manoël who depicted this country as so free, so easy to live in and so comfortable. But of what is the use of grumbling against the natural and inevitable enemies of life. It is either one thing or the t'other and there is suffering everywhere.

What is really fine here is the country, the sky, the mountains, Maurice's good health and Solange's *softening*. The good Chopin is not so brilliant in health. He misses his piano dreadfully. We have received news of it to-day at last. It has left Marseilles and we shall perhaps get it in a fortnight. My God! how rough, difficult and miserable sheer physical existence is made here. It is far beyond what anyone could have imagined.

By a stroke of luck I was able to buy some quite decent furniture from a peasant who did not want it. I had incredible trouble in getting hold of a saucepan, some firewood, some linen and anything else of that nature. For quite a month I have been on the point of feeling that we are really settled down but I never am. In this country a cart takes three hours to go five miles, so you can judge by that, of the rest. It

takes two months to make a pair of tongs. There is no exaggeration in what I tell you. You can guess everything else that I have no time to go into. I laugh at it but I have indeed suffered a little from fear of seeing my children suffer a great deal.

Fortunately my patients are doing well. To-morow we shall leave for Valdemosa, the most poetic place in the world. We shall spend the winter there. It only lasts a quite short time. That is the only good point of this country. I have never in my life come across more beautiful natural advantages of climate, etc., than in Majorca. Tell Valdemosa that I have not been able to see much of his relations as I have spent nearly all our time in the country, but five or six days ago I came back to Palma where I met his mother and his brother-in-law. They were charming to us. His brother-in-law is very nice and a much more distinguished man than the country would appear to produce as a general rule. His sister is a sweet girl and sings exquisitely. Tell M. Remisa that I thank him very much for having recommended M. Nunez to me for he is a splendid person and altogether *simpatico*. Please let him know that acting on his permission I have drawn three thousand francs at *Canut y Mugnerat* payable to bearer in a month's time, on Remisa, in Paris.

The peasants of the district are in general very charming and obliging, but it is all lip-service. I was only able to sign this draft on very hard terms as you see, though everybody begged me to take ten years over paying if I liked. I had not expected to have to spend three thousand francs suddenly in getting my furniture to Mallorca (I should only had paid a thousand francs in France for the same job). I wanted to send Buloz a lot of manuscript, but for one thing I have been so weighed down with material cares that I have not been able to produce much, and for another owing to the bad, slow communications he may not

have received what I did get off. You know Buloz: no manuscript, no cash. So I shall have to get M. Remisa to advance me three thousand francs for two or three months, and though it may spell misery to him to me it is just the usual contrariness of things. My hotel de Narbonne does not bring me in anything yet and I do not know what is happening about my Nohant rents. Do tell me whether I should accept M. Remisa's credit on these terms quite safely? If not please send my lawyer into the country so that he may send me on some rents as soon as possible.

I will write to Leroux from the monastery when my head is rested. If you only knew all I have to do! I do nearly all the cooking. For another of the amenities of this place is the impossibility of getting servants. The only servant we have got is a brute of a man, pious, lazy and greedy, a typical son of a monk (I think nearly all the people here are the children of monks). I should need ten of these creatures to do the work that your splendid Marie gets through. Fortunately the maid I brought from Paris is very devoted and has resigned herself to very heavy work. But she is none too strong and I have to help her through. Besides this food is difficult to arrange for unless people have a strong enough digestion to endure rancid oil and fat pork. I am beginning to get accustomed to it, but Chopin is ill every time that he has a meal which we have not prepared ourselves. So that I shall have to confess that in many ways our journey has been a terrible *fiasco*. But we are in for it. We cannot get out of it without exposing ourselves to the rigours of the wet season or without a whole fresh crop of expenses. And then I have put a lot of courage and perseverance into our instalment here. If Providence does not maltreat me too much I may believe that the worst is over and that we are going to gather the fruits of our trouble. The spring will be delicious, Maurice will entirely recover his

health; he flatters himself that he may have some calves to be worth mentioning some day; as for me I shall be busy with my own work, and have undertaken the children's lessons which have not suffered too badly up to now. They are both very studious with me. Solange is almost always charming since she learnt what sea-sickness is; Maurice declares that she got rid of all her venom in that way.

We are so different from the majority of the people and things around us that we really give the impression of being a poor colony of emigrants which disputes its existence with a malevolent and stupid race of natives. Our family bonds are all the closer for that and we press more closely one against the other, with more affection and happy intimacy. Can we complain of anything while our hearts are alive? We also appreciate our dear friends far away all the better for it. How precious the sweet intimacy and fraternal fireside of your home seem from this distance. Even better than when we are close to you, and that expresses it all.

Good-bye, dear friend. Kiss your good Manoël for me and remember me most cordially to all your good friends.

EXTRACT FROM A LETTER TO MADAME MARLIANI

Valdemosa, 22 *February*, 1839.

The fact is that we are very well pleased with the liberty this place gives us because we have to work; but we thoroughly understand that these poetic intervals are only oases in life, times of transition, a rest for the mind before fresh emotional stress. I say that in the purely intellectual sense, for as for the life of the heart that must go on unceasingly and I know that I love you here as much as I do in Paris. But the

idea of living in Paris appals me after the silence and imperturbable calm of my retreat. And then, at the same time, the idea of being buried here always without soaking myself afresh in the welter of the spectacle of human progress, would simply be a living death to me, for you cannot imagine what a race of people completely behind the times may be like. From a distance one imagines something patriarchial and poetic, a return to the golden age. But what a mistake! The sight of these patriarchs would I am sure reconcile you with our own age, and you would perceive clearly that if we are not yet worth much, it is not because in our modernity we know too much, but because we know too little.

So you see it is very difficult for me to tell you how much longer we shall stay here.

TO FRANÇOIS ROLLINAT

(A friend at Chatearoux)

Marseilles, 8 *March*, 1839.

Dear Pylades,

Here we are back in France after the worst voyage that ever was I should think. At the cost of a thousand difficulties and great expense we succeeded in establishing ourselves in Majorca, magnificent scenery but inhospitality its very self. We had not been there a month when poor Chopin who had been coughing ever since we left Paris got much worse, and we called in a doctor, then two doctors, then three doctors, and each was a greater donkey than the last, and they went about the island spreading the news that the illness was consumption in the last stages. Hence a great panic? Phthisis is rare in this climate and is supposed to be contagious! Add to this the selfishness, cowardice, insensibility and treachery of the inhabitants. We were immediately treated as if we

were plague-stricken ; we were already considered to be pagans because we never go to Mass. The owner of the little house we had taken, simply turned us out of doors and took out a magistrate's order to compel us to have the house disinfected and repainted. The native pundits of the law fleeced us utterly. We had to submit to expulsion and insult, and we had to pay.

Not knowing what would become of us, for Chopin was not in a condition to be taken back to France, we were glad to find a Spanish family who were in hiding for political reasons in an old monastery and in possession of a fairly complete set of peasant household goods. These refugees were desirous of getting back to France ; so we bought the furniture for three times its value and we moved into the monastery of Valdemosa. It is a poetic name and a poetic dwelling ; the landscape is wonderful, both wild and grandiose, the bow of the sea spreading across the horizon and awe-inspiring peaks close around us, and there are eagles pursuing their prey down to the very orange-trees of our garden ; a cypress avenue winds from the very top of our mountain into the depths of the gorge ; there are cascades half-hidden in myrtles and palm-trees growing far below ; no, nothing could have been more magnificent than our sojourn here !

But one feels inclined to conclude that wherever nature is most bountiful and lovely the human denizens are wicked and mean. We have all the difficulty in the world in procuring the most ordinary eatables, which the island produces in abundance, thanks to the outrageous untrustworthiness and the spirit of robbery in these peasants who make us pay ten times the value for everything because we should simply starve if we did not. We could not get any servants to come to us because we were not *Christians*, and besides that, no one would wait on a consumptive. However, there we were for good or ill. It was an incomparably poetical place to live in, and we were never disturbed

in our work. After waiting two months and paying three hundred francs Chopin finally got his piano and the roof of the cells echoed with the enchantment of his melody.

Maurice could almost be seen gaining health and strength; I was teaching the children at least seven hours a day rather more conscientiously than Tempête (that good girl whom I cordially embrace *all the same*) and I worked on my own account through the greater part of every night. Chopin was composing masterpieces and we quite hoped that the compensations of the situation made up for all the difficulties. But the weather became horrible, owing to the high level of the monastery. We were living in the clouds and we spent fifty days up there without once being able to go down into the plain; the roads were converted into torrents and we never saw the sun.

I should not have minded if poor Chopin could have endured it. Maurice did not suffer at all.

The roar of the wind and the sea buffeting against our rocks was sublime. The immense deserted cloisters cracked over our heads. If I had been writing the part of *Lélia* which took place in the monastery I should have been able to make it finer and truer. But my poor friend's lungs went from bad to worse. The fine weather would not come back. A maid whom I had brought from France, who up till then had seemed resigned to doing both the cooking and the housework in consideration of high pay, began to make objections on the ground that it was too much for her. A day came, when after having done the cleaning and the cooking, I was ready to drop with fatigue, for besides my teaching and my literary work, besides the incessant attentions that my patient's condition demanded, I was horribly rheumatic myself.

In this country fireplaces are unknown, but I succeeded in having a grotesque iron stove manufactured for us at a very exorbitant price. It made our

heads too hot and simply dried up our lungs. In spite of this the damp of the monastery was such that our clothes were getting mouldy on our backs. Chopin got worse and worse and in spite of all offers of service which were made to us in the usual Spanish manner, we should not have succeeded in finding one hospitable house in the whole island.

At last we decided to set out at any cost, although Chopin had not the strength to move. We asked for one first, last and only service, that some one would let us hire a carriage to take us all as far as Palma where we wanted to embark. This service was refused us although our *friends* all had the means of accomplishing it at their disposal ; we had to manage the distance of three miles with a hand-cart, a *birlocho* as it is called here !

When we arrived at Palma Chopin had a terrible hæmorrhage ; we embarked next day on the only steamboat which runs to Barcelona really entirely for the transport of pigs. There was no other means of leaving this cursed country, and I may tell you that our fellow-passengers were *one hundred pigs*, and their continual grunts and the smell they made, completely deprived our poor invalid of any peace or air worth breathing. He was still having fearful hæmorrhage when we arrived at Barcelona, and dragged himself along looking like a ghost. There fortunately conditions improved. The French consul and the Commander of the French naval station received us with a graceful hospitality quite unknown in Spain. We were given passage on a fine naval brig, whose doctor, an excellent man, came to our patient's assistance at once and arrested the hæmorrhage of the lung in twenty-four hours. From that moment he began to recover. The consul had us taken to the inn in his own carriage. Chopin rested for a week, after which we departed to France in the same steamer that we had come over to Spain on. Just as we were

leaving the inn at Barcelona the landlord tried to make us pay for the bed Chopin had slept in under the pretext that it was infected and that the police had ordered it to be burnt!

*** *** ***

At last we arrived at Marseilles. Chopin stood the crossing very well. He is here, very weak, but going on a great deal better in every way and in the hands of Doctor Canvière, an excellent man and an excellent doctor who takes almost paternal care of him and answers for his complete recovery. So we are breathing freely once more but after how much trouble and anguish!

I did not want to write any of this until it was all over, because I did not want to sadden you: I waited until better times were at hand and better times have come at last. May God give you a life full of calm hours and hopefulness. My dear friend I should not like to hear that you had been suffering as I have during our absence.

Good-bye. I press you to my heart. Remember me to any of your family who care about me, especially to your dear father.

Write to me here, care of Doctor Canvière, 71, rue de Rome. Chopin sends his remembrances and Maurice and Solange send kisses. They are both wonderfully well. Maurice is quite recovered.

TO MADAME MARLIANI

Marseilles, 22 *April*, 1839.

My dear good friend,

It is some time since I last wrote to you. I have been suffering from the *mistral* and I have had a feverish attack after a bad cold which is now almost cured. I am up again.

I have also been very busy moving from one inn to

another. In spite of all his trouble and all his searching our kind doctor has not been able to find any quiet little place in the country where we could lodge during the month of April.

I am rather tired of his town with its population of shop-keepers and merchants where the life of the mind is absolutely unknown, but I am immured here for the rest of the month of April.

When the *mistral* blows we surround ourselves with screens (for draughts are an abiding institution in all our rooms) and we work when we feel inclined. As soon as the sun appears, we go out for a walk in some walled street absolutely wrapped in a cloud of dust. But still we do finally arrive at some good point for a view and there we pause to breathe. As you may see the life we are leading is of primitive innocence and simplicity.

We shall be at Nohant all through the month of May and if you are very nice you will keep your promise to come and stay with us. Then we will all go back to Paris together at the beginning of June.

If Marliani has then returned from his long expedition it would benefit him very much to breathe the fresh air of Nohant. He likes the country and I will rusticate with him while you philosophise at the piano with Chopin. He does not like being at Marseilles very much, but he is resigning himself to a patient convalescence.

Tell Buloz not to be depressed. I am writing him a novel after *his own heart ;* he will receive it at the same time as the *Mickiewitz* and will be able to publish it first. But I must have prompt payment and before he does anything else he must bring out *La Lyre.*[1]

On the other hand, don't you take fright at the thought of a novel after Buloz's *own heart* for I am putting more things into it than were ever contained in his philosophy. He will be blinded by the fireworks.

[1] *Les Sept Cordes de la Lyre,* by George Sand.

He will not be able to discover the substance of the groundwork at all. Write to me often, dear. Your letters cheer me. If I just put my head out of the window here and look out into the street and over the harbour I feel that I must be turning into a loaf of sugar, or a case of soap, or a packet of candles.

TO MADAME MARLIANI

Marseilles, 28 *April*, 1839.

It is a long time since I heard from you, dearest, and I am not accustomed to it and it makes me really uneasy. Have you been ill perhaps? Like me?

Yesterday I saw Madame Nourrit[1] with her six children and a seventh coming soon. . . . Poor unhappy woman! What a return to France! accompanying the corpse that she herself has to see taken in and out of the train, and to pay the charges for the coffin as if it were a piece of luggage. She seemed to me to have the stoical courage which accompanies great grief; no tears, few words and she says some deeply striking things. She is still beautiful (she is very dark), but much worn by much child-bearing, much suffering and this appalling grief. Her children (of whom five are girls) are very charming, well brought up with an attractive intelligent look almost all resembling their father.

A very meagre funeral service was celebrated here for the poor departed, the archbishop being very surly about having it at all. It was held in the little church of Notre-Dame-du-Mont. I don't know whether the choir did it on purpose, but I have never heard singing more out of tune. Chopin offered himself to play the organ at the elevation; what an organ! Quite out of tune, squealing and going off into a series of explosions. However *votre petit* made the best of it!

[1] Widow of the celebrated tenor who committed suicide at Naples.

He chose the stops that were the least shrill, and he played the *Astres* not in the glorious exultation of Nourrit's own manner, but in a soft plaintive tone like the distant echo of another world. We were only a party of two or three but we all felt it so, and our eyes filled with tears.

The rest of the audience which was a huge one and inquisitive enough to be capable of paying fifty *centimes* a chair (an unheard-of price for Marseilles) was very much disappointed, for Chopin was expected to make a tremendous uproar and to break at least two or three stops of the organ. Probably they also expected to see me sitting in the chancel in full-dress, but they did not see me at all. I was hidden in the organ-loft and looking down through the railing I could see poor Nourrit's coffin. You remember how heartily I kissed him at the Viardots the last time that we saw him. Who would have thought that next time it would be under a black pall between candles ?

I spent the day very sadly I assure you. The sight of his wife and children made me even more sad. My heart was so full and I was so afraid of bursting into tears before her that I could not say a word.

Good-evening, dearest friend, I hope this letter will cross one of yours. I think you must have received *Gabriel*. I am counting on the payment for that from Buloz to enable me to leave Marseilles. Everything is dearer here than in Paris and my slow very *cautious* journey with Chopin will be very expensive.

Adieu my dearest. I kiss you tenderly.

TO MADAME MARLIANI

Nohant, 3 June, 1839.

Yes, dear friend, I have come home at last and am enchanted to be able to rest a long time after this life lived with luggage and in inns, which I have been

dragging along roads and over seas, for the last six months. We have arrived safe and sound and Maurice has astounded the whole of Berri by the metamorphosis of himself. He is almost a young man now and has set out on the voyage of life I think with all sail spread. My poor children are so happy at being in the country again that it does one good to see them.

What have you to tell me, dear friend, about causes to be supported and standards to be raised? My God! I feel convinced that neither men nor women are yet mature enough to proclaim a new law. The only complete expression of progress in our age is the Encyclopedia, you may be sure of that. M. de Lammenais is a valiant champion whose weapons are great thoughts and generous ideas, while he awaits the opening of a new way to the mass of ideas which cannot yet be disseminated because they are not yet completely formulated. Before the disciples set themselves to preaching the masters must finish teaching. Otherwise these scattered and undisciplined efforts would only retard the good effects of doctrine. For my part I cannot attempt to press forward before those from whom I expect enlightenment. My conscience can only embrace their beliefs slowly, for I confess to my shame, that up to now I have been almost entirely artist, and I am still in many ways and in spite of myself, a child.

Have a little patience great heart. Calm your ardent brain or at any rate nourish it with hope and confidence. Better days will come; it is already some consolation to be able to foresee their coming and to await them in faith.

In the midst of all this I had a tearful day yesterday when I received your letter. Gaubert's death does not affect me on his account, for he believed as firmly as I did in a better life than this one. He deserved it and he must by now have attained it. But I shed

tears on my own account because of the long separation before us. It is so helpful to the soul and to the heart to live under the aegis of real friends. He was one of the best of all, the one whom I esteemed most, I shall meet him again, that is what upholds me; I went to sleep yesterday evening, weeping and talking with him almost as intimately as if he were really there.

You will come to see me, won't you, my dearest? It is going to be so beautiful at Nohant. Our northern provinces are really so lovely after dusty arid Provence that it seems to me that I am in the garden of Eden here and I invite you here believing that you must be as much enchanted as I am. But at bottom I know that you will be coming for my sake and to be with a being who loves you, and one who loves and esteems no other woman, as completely as she does you.

That makes you angry perhaps, because you believe in women and you think them greater than men. That is not my opinion. Having been so much degraded it is impossible that they should not have sunk into the mentality of slaves, and it will take more long ages to raise women than it will take men to raise themselves. Whenever I think of it, I get the spleen, but I do not want to dwell too long on the present. God, while He waits for us to live in one complete brotherhood has surrounded us with incomplete families, very imperfect and badly organised groups, but affording us so much comfort that they give us all the necessary courage to wait and to hope. We do not therefore allow ourselves to be too much cast-down by the general depression. Have we not deep, lasting and reliable affections. And are not those an immense source of consolation? Don't ever exhaust your capacity for putting up with the follies and wickedness of mankind, You have your Manoël, who is dearest of all to you in life, a husband who still loves you with the first freshness of his first love. Do not complain too much.

He is such a good man and the more I see of him, the better I understand how much you must be to each other. That charming gaiety which gets you out of every difficulty, does not originate as you used to pretend in a light nature. On the contrary I think you have a very deep nature, but you do possess an unfailing supply of happiness within yourself and that is the secret of your philosophical outlook and the amount of respect and consideration that you receive. Good-bye, dear good person! Write to me often. Love me always. Scold Emmanuel because he never writes. Embrace your Manoël for me most heartily and remember me to all true friends. I enclose you a letter for Gaubert's brother if you will have the kindness to send it on to him.

TO SAINTE-BEUVE

Paris.[1]

I am afraid I did not thank you at once for the lovely verses which you sent off to me so speedily and so graciously. I had been very ill and my fingers are still so much affected by gout that I am simply trailing my pen as you will observe.

I am going to write to M. Olivier to thank him and please will you undertake to forward my note in your next letter to him. In the meantime do come and see me if you have time to idle away an hour or two, talking. I shall have a great deal to say to you which has been awakened in my head by your last article in the *Revue*, if indeed I have a brain as I am sometimes forced to doubt!

It was hardly due to my head that I felt so much joy in *recovering* you and I had really promised myself *not* to have so much heart. So long-drawn a sorrow, such

[1] This letter must have been written some time in the year 1839. In any case it is evidently the first of a new series and renews the correspondence broken by one of those "estrangements" which Sainte-Beuve alludes to in his *Portraits Contemporaines*.

keen regret should logically have exacted more rancour. You are quite welcome now to regard me as extravagant, and I know many people who would despise me for it. What does it matter?

If you want to be as great a chatterbox as we are always agreed on being, follow my example exactly in that matter.

Remind me that (besides your article) I have three things to talk to you about, for when I am listening to you, I forget what I had to say myself.

TO CALAMATTA

(An Italian artist friend)

Paris, May 1, 1840.

Dear Carabiacai,

I have been, I mean, my play[1] has been, hissed, just as I anticipated. Every word approved and admired by you and my friends raises outbursts of laughter and tempests of indignation. From every bench there were shouts that the play is immoral, and it is not certain yet that the government will not forbid its presentation. The actors, entirely disconcerted by this bad reception, lost their heads and played shockingly. All through the piece it was tremendously attacked and defended simultaneously, much applauded and much hissed. I am quite pleased with this result and I shall not alter one word in the succeeding performances.

I was quite calm and in good spirits while I was there, for it is in vain to say or believe that the *author* must necessarily be overcome, agitated and trembling. I was nothing of the kind, and the incident appeared farcical to me. If there is a sad side to it, it is to have to realise the grossness and profound corruption of

[1] Cosima.

the public taste. I never thought my play was a great one, but I always believed that it was fundamentally honest and that the sentiment is pure and delicate. I endure opposition very philosophically for I have known only too long what the times we live in, and the people we live among, are like. Let them shout! Our occupation would be gone if they were not what they are! Do not trouble yourself too much about my misfortune. As you know I foresaw it and I was just as calm and resolute the day before as I am the day after.

If the play is not forbidden I think that it will run its course and will end by holding the audience. Even if it does not, I shall have lived up to my principles and I shall always and unceasingly say what I want to say, throughout my whole life, no matter in what form. Come back to us soon. I miss you as an essential part of my life.

Yours with all my heart.

GEORGE.

TO CHOPIN

Cambrai, 13 *August*, 1840.

Dear boy,

I arrived at mid-day quite tired out, for it is forty-five not thirty-five leagues from Paris to Cambrai. I shall have some very funny things to tell you about the inhabitants of Cambrai. They think they are smart young men, they are idiots and shop-keepers and absolutely sublime examples of the type. If the *Marche Historique* fails to console us we may very likely expire from boredom at the attentions lavished on us. We have been lodged like princes, but what hosts! what conversation! what dinners!—we laugh about it when we are alone together, but when we are facing the enemy we cut a most piteous figure! I no longer

desire you to come, but I am longing to go away and I begin to understand your reluctance to give concerts. It is quite possible that Pauline Viardot will not sing the day after to-morrow for lack of a concert hall. We shall come back a day earlier than we thought perhaps. I am already longing to be far away from the citizens of Cambrai and their ladies.

Good-evening. I am going to bed. I am dropping with fatigue.

Love your old friend as she loves you.

G.S.

TO HER SON MAURICE

Paris, September 20, 1840.

My child,

I have received your second letter from Guillery. It makes me so happy to hear that you are well and enjoying yourself. Do not be rash with your pony but remember that you are not yet a very expert rider and do not gallop too hard on sandy soil. Sometimes paths run across the track or the pony may catch his foot in a root which has escaped notice. Then the best of horses may not be able to avoid falling and throwing you over his head like Emmanuel whom you saw pitched off under your very eyes. My poor father was killed in that way. Of course I know that if one is always thinking of the accidents that take place we should never do anything or go anywhere, which would be stupid cowardice. But a certain amount of prudence and good sense can be reconciled with daring and pleasure. You know what I think about that. I am very courageous and I have never done myself any harm. One must learn the habit of it. All this advice is to get you to be sure to keep your horse well in hand and not to lean forward when you gallop. The weight of the rider's body thrown

back gives force to the horse's hocks and makes him lift his feet, it also frees the shoulder action. My last word on the subject is *that you must multiply the points of contact* as that admirable M. Genot says.

Solange and I are still going to the riding-school and Calmatta, who has come back, made a sensational re-appearance on the fine chestnut horse which you have ridden from time to time. I am riding Sylvio every now and then, that big horse, which with all due deference to you I must declare emitted some strange sounds one day when M. Latry struck him. He is as stupid as a goose and as hard and tough as an old dog, but he answers to the spur and comes up to the bridle with plenty of force and dash. I like him fairly well although riding him has grazed my shin. Now we have got a love of a horse, slender, lightly built, eager, always on the dance and he never kicks. I have a *passion* for him and M. Latry considers that I show him off very well. Solange does not yet dare to mount him, but that will come. She is practising hard on Légère and on Diavolo.

That is enough about horses.

Balzac came to dinner yesterday. He is quite mad at present. He has discovered a *blue rose*, for which the horticultural societies of London and Belgium have promised a prize of five hundred thousand francs (Who knows? he says.) Besides the prize money he hopes to sell every seed at fifty centimes each and he has only spent fifty centimes to obtain this horticultural marvel. Thereupon Rollinat said naïvely: "Very well: then why don't you carry it all out at once?"

To which Balzac made answer:

"Oh, well! Because I have so many other things to do. But I shall go in for it one of these days."

We have been to see the *Medusa* of which we had heard so much from Delacroix; it is indeed a very fine melodrama. The *décor* and the scenery of the last two acts are superb. The scene on the raft really does

give an illusion and absolutely rendered Géricault's colour in the most astounding manner. I do hope that they will still be playing it when you come back.

That is all that has happened since my last letter. My nights are all given up to the *Tour de France*[1] which I shall soon be able to finish. Good-night, Bouli. There is a fearsome storm going on at present, but your ears are closed to it for I expect your snoring would entirely drown the noise. Adieu. A thousand kisses. Write to me.

TO AUGUSTE MARTINEAU-DESCHENEZ

Nohant, 16 *July*, 1841.

No, my dear boy, I do not forget you and my friendship for you has never changed. But I hardly write to anybody now, and I say that not to justify myself but so that you shall see that you are not worse treated than my other old friends. I am a culprit to you all and my horror of writing letters is almost equal to my disgust for literature, for *belles lettres*, I mean. However, I like to be visited by people I am fond of, whether one could describe them as *belle* or not. But I can no longer frame short pithy answers as I used to be able to, when I was young. Those days are past and apparently my brain is a strangely complicated one, so much so that to give a full account of myself would fill a volume, which I will spare you and you ought to be grateful for that.

The fact is that I can no longer say whether I am sad, or gay, strong or wearied. I can say nothing. I am pleased or discontented according to the external events which are common to us all, but I have lost initiative in life. Life is leading me by the hand, I no longer attempt to choose. And it is not sorrow but

[1] Her book—*Le Compagnon du tour de France*.

indifference as to my fate which has led to this. These things come with years and increasing weight; natural apathy has contributed to it and perhaps the influences of some periods of my life when none of my sympathies nor beliefs were realised nor realisable.

You see this is not an amusing letter and I am writing about things which you cannot understand. For God be thanked you are young and in love with life, you still have personal pains and pleasures keen enough to make you feel alive. Finally your ideas have not taken any direction which makes society antipathetic to you. Perhaps they never will take any such direction and I hardly know why you remember my existence, I who am not of this world, and only touch it with one paw, while the other three leap into some future which you hardly know the existence of and you do well to be thus ignorant. Enjoy your life? Do not complain although I can quite well see what a tiresome and painful time you are having, down there.

But still you will have seen Africa and the present which is often disagreeable to you will have obtained its price when it has become the past. Maurice, who thinks of nothing but painting and is really making progress, would much like to be in your place. We have been at Nohant for a month and we have been *enjoying* detestable weather, in consequence of a ridiculous little attempt at an earthquake which has entirely ruined our poor summer.

Solange is away at school now but will soon be back for the holidays. Maurice sends a kiss. Bring him back anything you can from Africa, be it only some old Arab sandals or a wisp of a horse's mane; he will be sure to think they have character and *chic*.

Good-night, my dear Benjamin, come back soon. We shall meet again in Paris and I shall return in the autumn. In the meantime do not be afraid that I shall push you on one side in my affections; I have

not changed in that respect. But I have become damnably serious and boring.

May God be with you and give you sunshine in a care-free life, and only permit you to have emotion in measured doses. That is the best I can wish for you.

Yours with all my heart.

TO MADAME MARLIANI

Nohant, 13 *August*, 1841.

It is a long time since I wrote to you dear lovely creature. All my nights have been given up to toiling at my work. I have spent all the days with Pauline,[1] going for walks, playing billiards and it all took me so much out of my usual indolent character and lazy habits that at night instead of getting on fast with my work, I fell asleep between each line. It is a very painful struggle I assure you and yet as I am already much behindhand with my work for Buloz, who torments me, I must not give way to sleep. I pique myself on being able to keep myself awake with cigarettes and coffee so that towards three o'clock in the morning I get to an end of my task and can then write the few letters which really matter. But coffee seems to have become opium to me, and tobacco deadens my wits, for, before I have written three pages of my novel I begin yawning until my jaw cracks, and when my task is finished I fall back on to my pillows as much exhausted as if Enrico had just been giving me a discourse on *fortifications*.

I am very much afraid that my novel will not be more amusing than his lectures ; it is impossible to be desperately bored with what you write without boring the reader to the same extent. And added to all this, I have got to re-read all my old novels in order to

[1] Pauline Garcia Viardot, the celebrated singer.

correct them for new editions. Judge what a pleasure it must be to reconsider the full-stops and commas in about thirty volumes. I am afraid I shall emerge from the task almost mentally deficient.

Pauline is going away on the 16th, Maurice leaves on the 17th to fetch his sister who ought to arrive here on the 23rd. She will go and see you if on the 21st (the day she comes out of school and starts for Nohant) she can snatch a moment from packing and shopping. As she will be in rue Pigalle, if you pass that way it would be very kind of you to go in. I should be sure of getting news of you then from someone who had really seen you.

*** *** ***

A thousand kisses.
Yours with all my heart.

GEORGE.

TO MADEMOISELLE DE ROZIÈRES

(A former pupil of Chopin, whom he disliked. She had become the mistress of Count Anton Wodzinski, brother of Marie Wodzinski, to whom Chopin was once engaged. She had also contrived to establish herself as a meddlesome intimate in George Sand's circle)

Nohant, 23 September, 1841.

Dear friend,

I do not understand why you accuse me of accusing you, when you know that I approve of you and pity you with all my heart. If I have not written to you it is only because I did not know where to address the letter and as the motive of your absence was an entirely secret one, and as one never knows what will become of a letter which is not going to the person it is destined for in a direct way, I wished to wait until I knew you were back in Paris before writing to you.

I am answering your letter by return of post this evening as I do not wish to wait until Solange's letter is finished as she will take two or three days to make and remake her pen, also I have no wish to leave you in the uncomfortable state of doubt that you are now in.

I spent the whole night correcting proofs so my head is splitting and I shall not write more than two or three lines. Always open your heart to me if it is any relief to you. I do not flatter myself that I shall be able to console you. I think your troubles are very great and it is in no one's power to cure them. But if you do feel the need of confessing them there is no affectionate heart which would receive your outpourings with more solicitude than mine. Where did you get the idea that I could be blaming you about anything and in what way are you culpable? I am not a Catholic. And I am not a society woman. I do not understand how any woman can exist without love, and without devotion to someone she loves. Be as prudent as you can so that this wicked, hypocritical world of ours shall not combine against you and crush you out of existence by depriving you of the means of existence.

But no one has the right to demand any account of your inner life. If I can do anything to help you in the struggle against these evil meddlers you must tell me every time and I will always rise to the occasion. Good-night, my friend. Write to me about yourself, about *him* and about the health of both of you. What you seem to be foreseeing alarms me very much. Is his health worse? Or are you going to be ill?

No one here knew that you were going away. I said nothing about it. I think that if there have been or if there still are any ructions going on they come from M.F. . . . who writes every week and always causes a notable change of temper[1] (I don't know whether his letters contain news or gossip). I only

[1] In Chopin.

know this gentleman by sight, but I think he has been flayed alive at some time in his life and is always ready to bear a grudge against the rest of the world for his own disasters. His character is perhaps more to be pitied than blamed, but he does the man we are thinking of a great deal of harm, for *he* is so sensitive that a mere prick wounds him profoundly.

Oh, my God! Are there not enough real troubles in the world without meddlers creating imaginary ones?

Yours always with all my heart.

TO CHARLES PONCY

(One of the friends associated with her in social reform)

Paris, 27 *April*, 1842.

My dear boy,

You really are a great poet; the most inspired and gifted poet of the whole joyous band which has risen up in these days out of the proletariat to express themselves in verse. You may one day be the greatest poet in France if the vanity which ruins the inspiration of all our bourgeois-poets can only be kept from approaching your noble heart. Guard your heart, that treasure of love and pride and goodness which gives you your genius.

People will try to spoil you; there is no doubt of that; they will bestow gifts and offer pensions and decorations perhaps as they offered them to an artisan-author who is a friend of mine, but he was prudent enough to guess what it would mean to him and to refuse.

The Minister of Education who is a judge of these things had already recognised the divine spark and the awe-inspiring force of a true poet. If you had confined yourself to the praises of the sea and

of Désiré, of nature and of love he would not have sent you that librarian-ship. But *l'Hiver aux Riches* and *Méditations sur les toîts* and other sublime outbursts from your generous soul opened his ears to your music. "We must tie him down with praise and benefactions," he must have said to himself, "so that he may no longer waste all his inspired force upon murmuring waves and his mistress."

Therefore take care, noble child of the people! You perhaps have a greater mission than you know of. Resist, suffer, submit to misery and obscurity, if you must, rather than abandon the sacred cause of your brothers. It is the cause of humanity; it is the salvation of the future, which God commands you to work for; He has shown it by giving you so forcible and brilliant an intellect. . . .

Ah! no! The rich man's son is by nature corruptible; the child of the people is stronger and his ambition looks beyond the puerile distinctions and amusements of comfort and vanity. Do you remember, dear Poncy, that moment of stress which made you exclaim:

"Pourquoi me brûles-tu, ma couronne d'épines?"

It was a divine moment. Ah well! Many men and women have exclaimed the same thing in that circle of weakness and corruption. Gold and honours have been lavished upon them, and then their crowns of thorn ceased to burn into their flesh. They are not as Christ was, and in spite of the fuss their contemporaries made about them posterity has put them into their rightful obscurity.

Now I want you to make a position for yourself which posterity will confirm. Let us know you as the only one of the great poets of our time who knows how to tread down the demon of vanity like the archangel Michael. I do not want to destroy the sacred gratitude in your soul, which no doubt you must feel towards the author of your preface, but that good

man never understood you. He was really afraid of you. He gave you bad advice and inadequate praise. When I speak of you in public I hope to do it better than that. When you make up a new edition I implore you to choose me as your editor and to confide the writing of the introduction to me.

Adieu! Never had any word so much meaning for me as that one and never have I pronounced it with more emotion. Your future is dedicated to God, your virtue, the salvation of your soul and of your true glory are all dedicated to God; and may your whole being and soul remain in His fatherly hands so that hypocrites and hoaxers do not soil His work.

If you wished to write to me although I am an enemy by nature and habit to the trade of writing letters I feel that if I am happy enough to receive a letter from you I shall answer you. I am going to set out for the country in a week. My address will be: *La Châtre département de l'Indre* until the end of August.

Yours always.

Your poem on the *Convict* made me cry. What social justice! No expiation! No rehabilitation! Nothing but barbarous chastisement.

TO MADEMOISELLE LEROYER DE CHANTEPIE

Nohant, 28 *August*, 1842.

Mademoiselle,

I received in Paris the letter which you have done me the honour of writing me two months ago. I should respond quite inadequately I am afraid to the confidence with which you honoured me if I did not state my opinion of your present position. However I am a bad judge of such things and I have no great sense of practical everyday life. I therefore beg you to consider the very brief opinion which I am about to submit to you as a synthesis from which I cannot go

back to analysis because the details of existence only present themselves to me as more or less unhappy romances which all lead to one general conclusion: society must be reformed from top to bottom.

It seems to me that it is given up to the most atrocious disorder and amongst all the iniquities which are consecrated within it, the most outstanding seems to me the relations of men and women which are established in an unjust and absurd manner. I therefore cannot advise anyone to enter into a marriage, sanctioned by the civil law which continues to support the dependance, inferiority and social nullity of the woman. I have spent ten years in reflection upon that subject and after having asked myself why all loves in this world, whether legitimised by society or not, were all more or less unhappy whatever the qualities and virtues of the souls thus associated; I convinced myself of the radical impossibility of perfect happiness and ideal love, in conditions of inequality, inferiority, and of the dependence of one sex upon the other. Whether it be by the law, whether by generally recognised morality, whether by opinion or by prejudice the fact remains that woman having given herself to man is either enchained or considered a culprit.

Now, you ask me if you can be happy through love and marriage. I do not believe that you will be happy through either, I am convinced of it. But if you ask me in what other conditions the happiness of women may be found I should tell you that as I am unable to shatter and remould society entirely, and well knowing that it will last beyond our own short sojourn here in this world, I must place the happiness of women in a future in which I firmly believe, in which we shall go back to better conditions in human life, in the bosom of more enlightened society in which our intentions will be better understood and our dignity better established.

I believe in life eternal, in eternal humanity, and in eternal progress, and as I embraced the beliefs of M. Pierre Leroux in these respects, I refer you to his philosophical demonstrations. I do not know whether they will satisfy you, but I cannot give you any better ones; as for me I found that they entirely solved my doubts and gave me a foundation for my religious faith.

But will you not ask me whether I counsel you to renounce all joy, all activity, all manifestations of the life of the moment, like Catholic monks, in the hope of a future life? I do not believe that any such duty exists, except for the weak and cowardly. That woman should strive to preserve herself from love and maternity in order to escape from suffering and humiliation is a romantic conclusion which I have tried to work out in my romance *Lélia*, not as an example to be followed, but as a picture of a martyr who gives food for thought to judges and executioners, I mean the men who make the law and those who apply it. My book is really a poem and since you took the trouble to read through the three volumes you did not I hope try to find a doctrine in it. I never preach, I do not feel that I stand on a high enough level for that. So much for me and my theory, but I have no talent for application, and I find myself quite unable to tell you in what conditions you ought to accept love, submit to marriage and sanctify yourself in maternity.

Yet love, fidelity and maternity are the most necessary, important and sacred conditions of a woman's life. But in the absence of a public morality and a civil law which renders these duties possible and fruitful at the same time, is it for me to point out a few special cases, in which to fulfil those duties you ought to resist the general custom, civil necessity and public opinion? On considering the matter, Mademoiselle, you will see that I cannot do that; you alone are sufficiently enlightened on the subject

of your own force of character and your own conscience to find a way across these gulfs and a road to the ideal which you conceive of.

In your place I should see only one way of cutting through these difficulties. I should not think of my own happiness. Being convinced that in these days (with the philosophical ideas that our intelligence suggests to us and the resistance that legislation and public opinion make to the progress that we feel the need of) no happiness is possible from the egoist's point of view ; I should therefore accept this life with a certain enthusiasm and a resolution similar in some ways to that of the early martyrs. Once personal happiness is really renounced every question in life becomes clearer. Then there is only one question, how to do my duty as I understand it. And what is my duty ? It is to place myself at the risk of much disappointment, persecution and suffering in the position where I can be of the greatest possible use to my fellows. If love's voice *will* be heard in me, let it work hand in hand with this abnegation. You should do as much good as possible to the object of your love. By that I do not mean the lavishing of wealth and the joys that it can procure, that is rather a means of corruption than edification. I mean that you should endeavour to bestow ennoblement upon the soul you love and to practice justice, charity and loyalty. If you cannot hope to produce these noble effects and to have this powerful influence on the being you love, your love and your fortune will not bring benefit. Ingratitude will repay and humiliation follow. If the wish for maternity speaks in you, let that (though always with abnegation) be the object of your life. That will be worked out by placing yourself in the most favourable conditions for the education of your children and by giving them the good examples and good precepts which you are bound to provide. Finally, if you have a desire to influence the circle

surrounding you, consider first whether the people in question are capable of being influenced and modified by good example and if it is to seek the conditions in which you will be able to give the good example.

Here my advice comes necessarily to an end. If you told me to apply these three precepts to myself I should probably come to grief over it. I believe I have a good conscience and good intentions. But I am not clever in my way of doing things and I have made a thousand mistakes when in action. I think you have a better judgment and that if you make use of my theory you will be able to extricate yourself from the uncertainty in which you are plunged.

Your main obstacle is your preoccupation with personal satisfaction which I consider it impossible to attain and if you have the courage to overcome that, light will break in upon your intelligence.

I have not read the works which you did me the honour to send me. They were lost with some other books when we were moving house and I have never been able to find them. If you will be so kind as to send them again I will devote my first free time to them. Please excuse this scrawl as I have had something wrong with my eyes. I hardly ever write letters now, and always with much difficulty.

Believe me, Mademoiselle, yours most sincerely,

GEORGE SAND.

I shall be in Paris about 25th September. Please address me at the office of the Independent Review.

TO CHARLES DUVERNET

Paris, 12 November, 1842.

My good Charles,

You are excellent and so are the chestnuts. We are munching them with every possible kind of sauce and this specimen of the products of Berri, covering

us with glory at the same time as satisfying our appetites, has rejoiced our hearts. Solange in particular is gobbling them up and Madame Pauline found them so good that I took upon myself to promise her a fine sack of them from you.

I must tell you that we are more than ever wrapped up in that good and great Pauline since her re-appearance at the Italian Opera. I say nothing of her voice and her genius, you know as much about it as we do, but you will be very pleased to hear that her success which was somewhat contested in former days, never by the public but by various cliques and coteries of journalism, is as brilliant and complete as possible in the *Ceneventola*. She is really admirable, and in the course of three performances running she had to repeat the *finale*. They are going to bring on *Tancrède* for her, and on the days when she is not singing we go out together on horseback. We have also taken up billiards. I have a pretty little table which I hired for twenty francs a month, in my drawing-room and thanks to our good friends we make our life as much like that of Nohant as it can be in this gloomy old Paris. Another thing which approaches it somewhat to our country life is the fact that I live in the same square as the Marliani family, with Chopin in an adjacent pavilion, so that we can run in and out of each other's houses in the evenings like good country neighbours without ever leaving the big Cours d'Orléans which is well-lighted and well sprinkled with sand. We have also adopted a plan of getting Madame Marliani to cater for us and we all have our meals together at her house, which is much pleasanter and more economical than for each of us to do housekeeping at home. It is a sort of hostelry which gives us far more pleasure and where mutual liberty is far more assured than it would be in restaurants.

That is how we are going on this year and if you

would come and see us you would I am sure find it all *very nice*.

Solange is at school but she comes home from Saturday to Monday every week. Maurice has gone back to the studio and is painting *con furia* and as for me, I am working again on Consuelo, like a dog that is being lashed, for I did so much loitering when we moved here, that I fell into a delicious habit of doing nothing. I hope I am giving you all the details that you may desire.

As for our Review we are in the course of reforming it and I hope that after the number which will appear this month we shall begin to move on a rising tide. You tell me to apply the spur, but that does not depend on me. In this bad world, zeal and courage are nothing without money. I have none, I have put none into the business, and Leroux and I get nothing for our pains. The capital is exhausted before the profits are felt at all. We thought we ought to double our capital in order to carry on, but we did better than that, we trebled it; and perhaps we shall quadruple it before we are done. At the same time we leave the rights of property and the trouble of management to our money-lenders. The general management, in addition to editing and to managing the printing-press all fell entirely on Leroux. Viardot who is always completely taken up with his wife's journeys, engagements and performances cannot give any really active or sustained co-operation. The little that we have been able to do so far has really been a *tour de force*, and I, seeing how everything is going on from near at hand, am far from trying to spur on my poor philosopher; I admire what he has been able to do without failing to issue a number every month and at the same time carrying on a magnificent effort for social reform. Finally, the January number will appear under the editorship of two new partners (perhaps of our three partners) and our names will

disappear from the cover because we are going to have a signatory manager—(in consideration of the security—another serious question which we shall elude, if no money turns up, by only bringing out one number a month) who will bring out our Review once a fortnight.

Viardot is arranging with them about his shares and we shall remain the principal editors. So be patient over our recent delays. If you count up your numbers of the Review, and consider the enormous amount of matter they contain, you will see that we have given you more than we promised you. Renew your subscriptions and if you can trust in our honesty of purpose, be quite sure that the Review will not change its line, considering that our partners are zealous and incorruptible co-disciples of the same doctrines.

Now tell me about yourself as I have told you about our doings. I see you still have a predilection for the romantic country of Vigan. Happy man able to live where you like and how you like! In spite of everything that I devise here to chase away the melancholy which this fine capital always gives me, my heart never ceases to swell with a great sigh when I think of the fields at home and the walnut-trees around the paddock, of the oxen being sworn at by the labourers, and of our happy meetings, rare it is true, but always so sweet and so satisfying.

When one is country-born one can never get used to the din of a city. It seems to me that the mud at home, in the country, is beautiful mud, while this Paris mud makes me sick. I like the jokes of my game-keeper much better than the wit of certain of my visitors here. It seems to me that my heavy heart is lighter when I have eaten some of Mère Nanette's frumenty than when I have drunk coffee in Paris. And indeed it seems to me that we are all perfect and charming down there, that no one can compare with us in amiability and that Parisians are all boobies.

Come and see us here however as you meant to. It would do me good and if I could kiss my plump Eugenie's rosy cheeks I should feel that I was kissing Sainte Solange our patron saint in person. Tell that naughty Gaulois to write to me a little and tell me whether poor little Laure is better. Let me have some news also of Duteil and Agasta who give no sign of life either from far or near. I have heard absolutely nothing of them.

It was very kind of you to have done something for our poor sufferers from the fire. We too are meditating making some effort for them, a little *soirée chantante* at which Madame Pauline will charm money into the collecting-boxes with her irresistible voice. If we only get twenty people to come we shall make quite a decent sum and I shall make up the deficit if necessary. So I hope the poor sufferers have lost nothing by it.

Good-night, dear old friend; a thousand kisses to your dear children. Tell Eugenie to love me and neither of you must give it up as I don't know what would become of me without it.

Yours,

GEORGE.

Cour d'Orléans, 5 rue Saint-Lazare.

Remembrances from Viardot, Chopin and my children. Pauline adores Berry and the peasants here. She will certainly come next year.

TO SAINTE-BEUVE

Paris, 24th Feb., 1825.
Monday evening.

My friend,

I have never before attended a *séance* of the *Academie* and no occasion could be more interesting to me than

your reception there. I have asked for tickets but none have been sent to me. Can you get me two? I should be infinitely obliged if you could.

Yours most sincerely,

GEORGE SAND.

TO SAINTE-BEUVE

Nohant, 11*th Oct.*, 1845.

Why, dear friend, are you holding a brief for Buloz? If I write for any review it will be for the *Revue Indépendante* which I created myself, which has no capital, and so far cannot pay its writers as well as Buloz pays, but I send my work there when I am in funds myself. I have a man of delicate and noble mind as managing editor to whom I would not show disloyalty for any consideration on earth. And then I have elbow-room there, and no one can demand modifications of my opinions of me. And really, my dear friend, who would fall into line to form the *fraternal phalanx*, you speak of, to welcome me to Buloz's *Deux Mondes* except yourself?

There is not one of that crew, I verily believe, who has not maltreated me on one occasion or another except perhaps M. Lerminier, whose opinions are always sympathetic to me.

But I have no wish to recriminate: that is not in my nature which is a happy and forgiving one. Only I do require air, space, absence of contradiction, fair treatment, peace of mind, confidence and freedom of action.

Now that there is no large public except for the big dailies I send my work all over the place so long as there is no chicanery, but when it is a question of an exclusive public, that is the readers of the Reviews, I owe allegiance to François[1] and not to Buloz, who

[1] Editor of the *Revue Indépendante*.

never really accepted me, and would reject me absolutely to-day.

There, please forgive all this, my friend, and tell Buloz that he can order an article in which my execution and burial are carried out as usual. That is always his way the day after I refuse his offers. I should never revive my reputation through him.

Thank you for all your kindness to Eliza.[1] She is extremely grateful herself and I am happy in being able to thank you on my own account. Does this horrible weather give you the spleen? Perhaps the cold is not so cruelly intense in Paris. My great consolation is in having a troop of children here, my own and others belonging to the family, and they are laughing and tearing about all day. At that age the weather always seems fine. Good-evening. Do not bear me a grudge. I wish I could answer you differently, for I am,

Your most sincerely,

TO SAINTE-BEUVE

Paris, December, 1845.

You owe quite a lot of justification for not having been to see me yet and for insinuating such bad reasons for it as my *tempest*. I should very much like to know what you mean by that word.

You surely cannot imagine that a discussion of interests could be so stormy as to agitate my soul very considerably. It must then be our Review[2] to which you refer in those too pompous terms. But I fail to see what change this form newly adopted for my work, can have operated in the knowledge that you have of my heart and my mind.

[1] Mazzini's friend, Eliza Ashurst.

[2] The *Revue Indépendante* was founded by George Sand, Louis Viardot and Pierre Leroux.

After having delivered this incomprehensible reproach to me indirectly you owe it to me either to come and explain and listen to my retort, or to come and see me as you used to do, ignoring the whole question if you are not inclined to enter into it.

You see my friend there is no deeper and more complete form of candour demanded from true friendship than that required in dealing with ordinary affairs of life. It must be one of two things: either we are at war because our *Reviews* are hostile to one another, or we neither of us know anything about that and are friends as in the past. In the first case, the fault is not on my side; whenever you are mentioned in my Review it is in the course of discussions as respectful as they are affectionate both in subject and form (see Leroux's article)[1]. When I am mentioned in your paper (see the article of M. Lerminier.)[2] I suppose you will think me very unjust and foolish if I am angry because that pedant chatters on against me in a journal which has you on its staff to-day, while I took an active share in it not so very long ago. But I should consider myself unpardonable if something similar against you were to slide into my Review. You see my heart and my principles are knit up with my own Review and I know that you are not more closely connected with Buloz's Review than I was then (as a conscript might say) *I was one of them.*

In the second case, should we meet in the mêlée like heroes of romance who chance upon each other upon the battlefield and make signs for mutual assistance instead of attacking one another, what can you mean by talking about *tempests* which alienate you from me? I have you there! You really must emerge from your enveloping cloud yourself and admit that you did not know what you were talking about when you last

[1] *Mutilation d'un écrit posthume de Th. Jouffray. Revue Indépendante. 1st November,* 1842.

[2] *Revue des Deux Mondes. 1st April,* 1844, *article entitled: Madame Sand.*

wrote to Chopin. I hope that this admission to me will not be too hard for you in spite of Buloz and his learned cabal!

Always yours most sincerely,

TO MADAME MARLIANI

Nohant, 1st Sep., 1846.

Dear friend,

A thousand thanks, but Solange will not be fit to travel to Paris just yet, unless by slow stages,[1] as we manage her expeditions here in the country. Moreover I have no more faith in Doctor Royer than in Papet and I am afraid that doctors can do very little for these nervous conditions. We are setting out to-day for various points of Berri and la Creuse and we stay a day or two at each place we halt at. She has been a little better for the last three days, but she is still without any appetite and unable to sleep. It is very good for her to get a little bit tired but to be overtired is simply fatal. The day before yesterday we went to Chateauroux to set Delacroix on his way and to meet Emmanuel who rather grimaced at the idea of packing up again immediately and travelling on rather bad roads to rather uncomfortable hostelries. But he prefers that to staying here alone.

I am writing in haste. Yes, you really ought to go and spend this fortnight as well in Normandy if the journey is short and not tiring, for we shall not get much more fine weather this autumn I am afraid. We have had exceptional heat and tremendous rains which seem likely to be the heralds of an early winter. I

[1] Solange who became less and less happy at home as she grew up, had sunk into a condition of serious nervous weakness since George Sand insisted on bringing Augustine, the daughter of her own mother's sister to live with them. Augustine's mother, who had been a woman of the town, was married to an artisan. Solange loathed the connection and both she and Chopin were made miserable by this addition to their circle.

cannot tell you for certain how I shall be spending the month of September. I am absolutely miserable about Solange's condition and I am determined that it shall not get hold of her so as to last all through the winter. You are more than kind to offer me hospitality. We still have our flat in the Rue Saint-Lazare and there is no reason why we should not stay there if we want to. But Papet does not advise me to embark on any long journey with Solange; we have discovered that they make her much worse. We take her out for a mile or so on horseback, and then the same distance in the carriage, then comes a rest, and so on every day. I try to cheer her up but I myself am not cheerful at bottom. She is very pleased to know how sympathetic you have been about her and asks me to thank you. She recommends you not to imitate her and to keep your health whatever else you lose.

Adieu dear. Tender kisses. I must be off now.

GEORGE.

TO MADAME MARLIANI

Nohant, 6 May, 1847.

Dear friend,

You are probably astonished at my silence. As for me I am really surprised that I have the strength to write to you at all after the mental fatigue I have been through and with the eye-strain I have been having. I can only write three lines but I want you to have the news before anybody.

Solange is going to be married in a fortnight to the sculptor Clésinger, a man of enormous talent, who is making a lot of money, and can give her the brilliant life she is always longing for. He is violently in love and she seems to be very fond of him. This time she was as swift and determined in making up her mind as

she has been capricious and irresolute with other men. Apparently she has found the object of her dreams. God grant it is so.

I like the young man very much and so does Maurice. At first sight he is rather a savage but he is full of divine fire, and I have been studying him really for some time though he did not know it. Thus I know him as well as one can know anyone who is bent on making a good impression. You will tell me that is not enough always, and I know it is true. But I am given confidence by the fact that the dominant note of his character is a sincerity which comes very near brusquerie. He therefore sins only through artlessness, and he has other qualities which compensate for the failings that he *may* have and *must* have. He is industrious, courageous, active, determined and persevering. Strength is a great thing and he has plenty of it, both physical and moral. Fortuitous circumstances led me to make a regular *inquiry* into his circumstances and past life, like a procurator's enquiry at the Assizes.

I was obliged to do this because someone had been telling me all the evil things about him that can possibly be said about a man. I did not then know that he was thinking of marrying my daughter; it was while he was sculpting busts of us. He wanted to do them for nothing, in marble, but it would not have been advisable for me to accept presents of that description from a man of whom such terrible things were said. And of course I had to find out whether the person who abused him was a habitual slanderer or a decent creature. A few explanations to which I did not attach much importance at the time brought out a whole host of private bits of information, so that I was enabled to judge by *proved* facts; for you know that in these matters there is always an unforeseen chain of discoveries. Thus I obtained certain information that Clésinger was an irreproachable person

in every sense of the word and that his accuser was a professed wit and very careless about what he says. In that way I came to know all the most intimate details of Clésinger's life before he asked me for my daughter's hand, and so, chance threw more light on his life than I could have obtained by examining him myself for years on end. Nevertheless when I left Paris I had not been able to come to any decision and it is only a month ago that his determination swept down all obstacles and reduced every objection to nothingness. He went to see M. Dudevant who consents. We don't know yet where the marriage is to take place. Perhaps at Nerac in order to prevent M. Dudevant from going entirely to sleep in those eternal to-morrows of provincial life.

I will write again in a few days' time; for so far nothing at all is settled, and I am waiting for Clésinger's arrival, to-morrow or the day afterwards, to fix the day and the place. But it will take place in May. The banns are being published and they are already sewing at the white dress. But down here they don't know anything about it and we are not sending out any public announcements. We have had to consider a very keen grief, not far from us here. Letters have been exchanged which are sincere and very satisfying. The deserted one is a splendid young man who as his uncle M. de Faudeffe says is a *true French nobleman*.[1] I am so grieved for that great heart, but we are bringing better brains into the family and the absolute fatality with which it has come about, must be a sign that it is God's will. I did not want her to make another choice so quickly (but you know that parents are helpless in such matters) and I think the choice will have to be ratified very soon.

Good-night, dear friend. Write to me about

[1] A young landowner of the neighbourhood to whom Solange was engaged for a short time. After meeting Clésinger, she broke off the engagement.

yourself. I cannot tell you anything about myself except that I am tired to death for in the midst of all these preoccupations I must keep on writing to bring in a little cash. The peasants round here are in a bad way and I know what their privations mean. Many kisses. Do take care of yourself and will yourself into good health. Make duties which will leave you no time to think of yourself. It is the only way to bear the terrible burden of life. But the heavier it is the better one goes along perhaps. And duties are not difficult to find in these days of misfortune and material suffering. Your heart knows that. Put your brain and your legs at the service of your heart and the imagination will be lulled.

TO MAZZINI

(then in London)

Nohant, 23 *May*, 1847.

Brother and friend,

It is only a fortnight ago that I received the *People's Journal* with the two articles about me. Please thank Miss Jewsbury the authoress of the first and let me tell you how very happy yours has made me. You see I know it comes straight from your heart. Other eminent men have wished to praise or defend me. But their words did not come from the depth of the heart like yours, for in a general way, men of intelligence have very little heart and I do not feel much kinship with them. My gratitude to them was only a matter of obligation, a polite form, while in your case I do not thank you ; I feel that you say what you think for me because you have understood the sufferings of my soul, its needs, its aspirations and the sincerity of my desires for good.

No, my friend, I am not thanking you for a favourable article as they are called, but I thank you for loving me, and for calling me your sister and friend. There is providential fatality and something like an instinct for secret divination hidden within hearts.

Ten years ago I was in Switzerland; you were then in hiding there and by accident I discovered your retreat. One morning I very nearly started off to come and see you. I was still at the tempestuous stage. But I turned back telling myself that you had a heavy enough burden to carry and that you had no need of an agitated soul like mine. I knew very well somehow that later on we should meet, if I resisted the temptation to suicide which pursued me on those glaciers. The dizziness of Manfred is so profoundly human. Yet there really is a recompense in life attached to the accomplishment of one's duties, compensations for the hardest sacrifices, since your friendship crowns my loss of youth, and consoles me for the past.

Come to France then; come to see me in my Black Valley, such a kind, stupid place. I am more myself here than in Paris, where I am always either morally or physically unwell. You and I have so many things to say to each other, I have so many things to ask you. I have advice to ask which I have not dared to mention to anyone for a long time and solutions of problems to ask which I hope to get from you. You did say this winter that you would come.

I should have written before if it had not been for serious domestic events which have even robbed me of sleep. I have just got my daughter married, and well married, I think, to a very gifted and deeply inspired artist of great power. I had only one ambition for her that she should love and be loved. My wish is realised. The future is in the hands of God, but I hope that this love will last as married love.

I am, with affectionate respect, your sister,

GEORGE SAND.

TO MADEMOISELLE DE ROZIÈRES

(Solange and Clésinger had only been married a month, but already Clésinger's mask was off. Chopin, who had just left Nohant, for good as it turned out, had been much opposed to the marriage)

Nohant, June, 1847.

We have nearly had our throats cut here. My son-in-law threatened Maurice with a hammer and would perhaps have killed him if I had not rushed between them, striking my son-in-law in the face and receiving a blow in the chest from him. If the village priest had not disarmed him by force, Maurice who had a revolver, would have killed him on the spot. Solange was occupied in poking the fire all the time ; she was in an icy rage, and it was she who had raised this hell by unimaginable gossip, and lies and slander, without any provocation in the shape of Maurice's teasing, or anything else that she could complain of. That diabolical pair went away yesterday, in debt up to the ears, triumphing in their impudence, and having made a scandal in the country round, from which their reputations will never recover. I had to stay indoors three days to recover from that murderous blow. I never want to see them again and they shall never set foot in my house again. They have passed all limits. My God! I have done nothing to deserve such a daughter!

I have been obliged to write some account of this to Chopin. I was afraid he might arrive here in the middle of a catastrophe and that he would die of grief and horror. Do not tell him how far things went. We will keep it from him if possible. Do not tell him that I have written to you and if M. et Madame Clésinger do not go and boast of their conduct, keep the secret for me. . . .

TO MADEMOISELLE DE ROZIÈRES

Nohant, July 25th, 1847.

My friend,

I have uneasy and alarmed. I have had no news of Chopin for several days, I do not know how many days, for sorrow has prostrated me so much, that I have lost count of time. But it seems to me that it is too long. He was going to start, and now he has not come and has not written. Has he set out? Has he been delayed by illness somewhere? If he were seriously ill would you not have let me know when you saw that it was not a temporary upset? I should have set out already but for the fear of crossing him on the way and my horror of going to Paris and exposing myself to the hatred of her whom *you* consider so kind and tender to me.[1] . . .

Sometimes to reassure myself about his health I make myself think that he is much fonder of her than of me, and is sulking and taking her part.

I would much rather hear that, than hear that he is ill. Do tell me quite frankly what is really going on. If the terrible mischief-making and incredible lies of Solange have got hold of him, so be it! I am indifferent to everything so long as his health improves.

TO MADEMOISELLE DE ROZIÈRES

(After an interval in which Chopin and George Sand had exchanged their farewell letters. Chopin showed George's letter only to his friend Delacroix, who notes in his diary: "*It must be admitted that it is atrocious. Cruel passions and long repressed impatience come to light in it at last, and by a contrast which would be funny if it were*

[1] Solange. Before Chopin left Nohant he had had a bitter quarrel with Maurice and as Maurice had always been hostile to his sister, this no doubt inclined Chopin to take her part.

not so sad, the author gets the better of the woman from time to time, and gives vent to tirades which seem to have been borrowed from a novel, or a philosophical treatise.")

Nohant. No date.

Feeling ill enough to die of it, I was going to try and find out why no one wrote to me. Then by the morning post I got a letter from Chopin. I see that as usual I have been the dupe of my stupid heart and that while I was living through six sleepless nights tormenting myself about his health he was employed in saying and thinking evil of me with the Clésingers. Very well! The dignity of his letter is quite laughable and the sermons of this excellent *père de famille* will indeed be a lesson to me. Forewarned is forearmed and I shall know what to think henceforward and feel very tranquil in that respect.

I can guess what happened to a large degree; I know what my daughter is capable of in the way of calumny and I know what Chopin's poor head is capable of in the way of credulity. But my eyes are opened at last, and I shall behave accordingly. I shall no longer lavish away my flesh and blood in the service of ingratitude and perversity. At least I am in peace entrenched at Nohant and far from my implacable enemies. I shall know now to hold my fortress now against mischief-makers and madmen. Of course I know that I am being torn to pieces figuratively all the time. But what does that matter! When they have satisfied the lust of their hatred in that direction they will turn and rend one another. . . . Really it is *magnificent* of Chopin to be meeting and approving of Clésinger who *struck* me, because I seized away the hammer which he was aiming at Maurice. Chopin, whom everyone said was my most faithful and devoted friend! It is admirable! My child, life is one long bitter irony, and those who are foolish enough to love and trust are destined to close their careers with a

mixture of lugubrious chuckle and despairing sob, as I hope I shall do soon. I believe in God and in the immortality of my soul. The more I suffer in this world the more firmly I believe in immortality. I shall leave this temporary existence with profound disgust for it, to enter into life eternal with a great confidence. . .

TO MAZZINI

Nohant, 28th July, 1847.

My brother and friend,

Will this year of 1847, the most disturbed and painful in my whole life, perhaps in some regards at least bring me the satisfaction of seeing and knowing you? I dare not believe it, so insistently has bad luck pursued me, and yet you promise that I shall and the day is fast approaching. In a few days the railway between Paris and Chateauroux will be open; Chateauroux is nine miles from my house. So it is no longer necessary for me to send you a little plan for your journey in order to prevent you suffering from the inconveniences of the journey. Difficult travelling is one of the numerous sores of poor France, which also has such great wounds. You will get to Chateauroux from Paris in six or seven hours, and from Chaterauroux to Nohant along the high road by the coach in three hours.

What a kind letter, and what a true tender heart you have. I am certain that you can do me a great deal of good and that you will reinforce my courage which for a long time has undergone some rude shocks from facts in my own life. I should say that for a long time now I have had great difficulty in keeping myself I will not say, a believer, for faith conquered at the price I gave for mine can never be lost, but I do have

difficulty in remaining serene. And serenity is an obvious duty imposed upon the souls of believers. It is bearing witness to their religion, a duty they owe it. But we cannot make pure abstractions of ourselves and the confident expectation of a better life, the love of an immortal ideal does not succeed in destroying the sense of the painfulness of this life which lives within us. At the present day, life is in a miserable condition. Corruption and impudence have joined forces on one side, and on the other folly and weakness are close allies. All souls are stricken with malady, brains are disturbed, and those whose mental and moral health is the best, are bound to be the most miserable, because they can *see* and *understand* what is going on and therefore they must suffer.

Yet if we would ever reach God, we must struggle through all this, and it certainly follows that every man must suffer in detail what the whole mass suffers. Therefore come to grasp me by the hand a moment, you, who have experienced every kind of martyrdom. Even if you tell me nothing that I don't know already it seems to me that I should be fortified and sanctified by the ancient formula which consecrates friendship between men.

I received one of your pamphlets but not Carlo-Alberto's letter, unless you sent it off too late and it is lying in Paris. I got the translations as well. Please give my thanks to the sender.

The word *traîne* is a local one and not French in ordinary use. It means a little winding path, shaded and over-arched. But our Berry dialect which is only old French, makes a distinction between a foot-path and a cart-track. The first is called a *traque* or *traquette*, the second, a *traîne*. It is a pretty word in French and is understood or guessed at even in Paris where the populace speaks the ugliest and most incorrect language in all France, because it is a language based on fantasy and chance, and successive rapid

creations, whilst the provinces preserve the tradition of the language and do not create many new words. I have great love and respect for the language of our peasants and I believe it to be really more correct than the other specimens of French.

TO HER SON MAURICE

(on the eve of the Revolution of 1848)

Nohant, 23rd February, 1848.

My child,

As you may well believe we are very anxious here. We only heard this evening that Tuesday was a day of great disturbances and that to-day has been worse. You must come home at once, not because I give way to childish terrors, nor would I wish to make you share them even if I experienced them myself.

You know that I would never advise you to show cowardice. But your place is here, if serious trouble breaks out. A revolution in Paris would have an immediate response in the provinces, and most certainly in our neighbourhood because news travels here in a few hours. You have duties at home and it would be inexcusable for you to stay away.

I am not speaking of myself; I never feel that personal danger is likely, and am not in any case disposed to dwell on the subject. But if any action should be demanded of me you are my natural representative. Then come back at once unless you see that real tranquillity has been re-established. Leave our Paris business in Lambert's hands. You could go back again in a few days, when we see what is really going to happen.

Good-night, my child. I shall expect you. I hope to have a line from you to-morrow morning. If the post does not reach us, it will mean that the trouble

is serious. But, I must repeat that you have no serious duty to perform in Paris, and here, emergencies may arise in which you must not fail to do what is expected of you. A thousand kisses *from your Mother.*

TO CHARLES PONCY

(Her friend at Toulon)

Nohant, March 9th, 1848.

Vive la Republique! Oh what a dream! What enthusiasm! and at the same time what restrained and lawful demonstrations are going on in Paris. I went up there as fast as I could and I saw the last barricades open before my feet. I saw a great people gathered together; sublime, simple and generous: the French united together at the heart of France, at the centre of the world: the most admirable people in the universe! I have spent many nights without closing my eyes and many days without once sitting down. Everyone is crazy and intoxicated with excitement, happy to have gone to sleep lying in the mud and to have awakened in the heavens! May all who surround you be inspired with courage and confidence.

The Republic is established, assured; we would perish rather than let her sink! The government is composed of excellent men for the most part, yet all a little lacking and inadequate for a task which demands the genius of Napoleon and the heart of Jesus. But the combination of all these men of soul and talent will suffice for the situation. They are men of goodwill and they are seeking and experimenting. They are all sincerely dominated by a principle which is superior to the individual capacity of each, the will of them all and the rights of the nation. The populace of Paris is so right-minded, so indulgent, so confident

in its cause and *so strong*, that it is a good support to its own government.

That such a frame of mind should be *lasting* is the social ideal. It must be encouraged. From one end of France to the other, everyone must help the Republic and save it from its enemies. The desire, the principle, the fervent wish of the members of the provisional government is that men who represent the people should be sent to the National Assembly, as many of them as possible, coming from the heart of the people.

And so you see my friend that your friends must turn their eyes upon you as a deputy. I am so sorry that I do not know any influential people of our way of thinking in your town. I should beg them to choose you if I did and in the name of my maternal friendship for you I should command you to accept without hesitation. Listen! You *must act!* It is not enough to let others act! There is now no question of ambition and vanity as they appeared in other times. Nowadays everyone must be able to take the rudder, and should give all his time, all his heart, all his intelligence, and all his virtue to the Republic. Poets can be great citizens; look at Lamartine! The working-men must tell us their needs and their inspirations. Write soon and tell me that my idea has been thought of and that you wish it. If only I had friends at Toulon I would soon make them understand.

I am starting off for Paris in a few days probably to launch either a newspaper or something else. I shall choose the best possible instrument on which to accompany my song. My heart is full and my head on fire.

All my physical ills and personal sorrows are forgotten. I live, I am strong, I am active, I feel twenty years old. I have come back here to help my friends to the best of my ability to stir up Berri to

revolution for it is a sleepy hole. Maurice is busy revolutionising the village. Everyone is doing what he can.

And while all this has been going on my daughter has given birth quite prosperously to a daughter. Borie will probably stand as deputy for Correze. In the meanwhile he will help me to organise my journal.

Well I hope we shall all meet in Paris full of the life of action and ready to die in the barricades if the Republic should fall. But it can't! It will live: its hour is at hand! It is for you men of the people to defend it to the last gasp.

Kisses to Désirée and to Solange. I bless you and love you. Write to me here. They will send on the letter to Paris if I am there. Show this letter to your friends. This time I authorise and even demand it.

TO HER SON MAURICE

(Part of the letter)

Paris, 23rd March, 1848.

My Bouli.

I am already busy as a Government official. I have drafted two governmental circulars to-day for the Education Office and the other for the Home Office. I am so amused because they are addressed to *maires* and you will be receiving official instructions from your *mère*.[1] Ah! Ah! Monsieur le Maire, you must keep a straight course and to begin with you must read one of the *Bulletins de la République* to your assembled National Guard, every Sunday. When you have read it you must explain it, and when that is done you must affix the said *Bulletin* to the church-door. The postmen have orders to report any Mayor who fails to do this. So please do not neglect any of these

[1] Maurice Sand had just been appointed Mayor of the village of Nohant-Vic.

ceremonies and if you read the *Bulletins* attentively your duties as mayor and citizen will become clear to you. You must do the same thing with the Education Office and Home Office circulars. I hardly know who to attend to! People are demanding my help on every hand. I ask nothing better.

In the meantime my two *Letters to the People* have gone to Press. I am going to run a Review with Viardot and write a Prologue for Lockray. I persuaded Ledru-Rollin to ask Pauline to sing a *Marseillaise*. For that matter Rachel[1] is singing the real *Marseillaise* at the Comedie Française every night in the most splendid way, at least, so everyone says. I shall go to hear her to-morrow.

TO LAMARTINE

Paris, April, 1848.

Monsieur,

I understand you so well. You have no thought but to prevent a bloody revolution, to stem the tide of violence and to restrain the probably too hasty action of a democracy which is still blind and barbaric in many respects. I think that on the one hand you exaggerate the elementary condition of the democrats and on the other, you do not appreciate what rapid and divine results towards progress these convulsions may bring about. How is it that you are doubtful of them, you who are privileged to read so deeply into the mind of God, and thus understand how dear this travailing humanity must be to Him? You, who are able to judge of the miracles which the Omnipotent holds in reserve for the minds of the feeble and the oppressed, interpreting them by the sublime revolutions which have blazed out in your own poet's and artist's mind? In so few years you have raised

[1] The great tragic actress.

yourself to the sublimest heights of human thought, and making daylight for yourself in the depths of the obscure shades of Catholicism, you have been carried high enough by the spirit of God to proclaim this oracle which I repeat from morning to night:

"The more Light we have, the better we can see God!"

You have burnt away the futile smoke and mists of the vanity of this world which claimed you, by the divine fire which blazes within yourself; and now can you not believe that this divine Will which accomplished the miracle for an individual, can send the same dazzling lightenings of truth throughout a whole people? Do you really believe that He will make you wait centuries to realise the magical vision which He has permitted your eyes to gaze on? Oh, no! no! His Kingdom is nearer at hand than you think, and if it is near at hand that means that it is justified, holy and marked on the dial of the centuries. Great poet and great man as you are, you have mistaken the hour! You think you are still living at a period when the duties of a man of property and a man of genius were identical and had equal power in retarding the ruin of a society which was still desirable and lasting! You think that the work of pulling down is only beginning when as a matter of fact it is complete; you think that some last corner-stone still supports the edifice! Are you going to be that corner-stone, the key-stone of that arch which shelters impurities, you who hate impurity from the bottom of your heart, and abjure the cult of Mammon before all the world in your lyrical outbursts?

If the business-men to whom you abase yourself would frankly devote themselves to the emancipation of the human family, I should admire you as a saint, and I should say that it was following the example of Jesus, when His heart and genius combined, led Him to sit at table with usurers in order to bring them to

the Truth. But you know very well that you are not working for any such results. That miracle of converting and softening the hearts of the corrupt and brutalised has to be left in the hands of the Eternal and it seems that He will not attempt regeneration by that method since not one of these souls is enlightened or softened! He works at the bottom, and the top must be blown off like dissolving foam. Why have you placed yourself among those whom God will not enlighten and not among those who have received His Light? Why have you placed yourself between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat in order to preach resignation to the latter until the coming of a new order, which your business-men are delaying by every means in their power; while to them you recommend sacrifices which result in nothing but little concessions which are extorted more by the effects of fear than of persuasion? Ah! My God! If fear is their only master, then take up a position amongst the people to join in their threats instead of trying to hold back the inevitable to-morrow by preventing them from carrying out their threats. Since you must be in action, since you are of so industrious a nature, loving to put your hand to the plough, that is the only action worthy of you, for the times are ripe for this action and it will surprise you in the midst of that impartial calmness behind which you entrench yourself, shutting your eyes and your ears to the rising and roaring tide. My God! My God! There is still time and since your heart is full of truth and of the love of God there is really nothing between you and the people but an error as to the date in the world's history at which we now stand. You are each consulting the calendar from a different point of view. Do not let posterity be able to say: "That great man died with his eyes open to the future, but closed on his present. He predicted the coming of the reign of justice and by a strange contradiction too frequent among famous men,

he clung to the past and did his best to prolong it. It is true that even one of his verses had more value and more effect than the whole of his political career; because this verse was the voice of God speaking within him, and his political actions were dictated by human fallibility, but it is cruel not to be able to register him amongst the enlightened, and the devoted in this period of storm and stress for he misunderstood the rapidity of the onward march and the immediate issue."

If you should attain the Presidency of the Chamber, and if in that seat you are no other man than he who sat in the vaulted chamber at Saint-Point all the better. I think that you can do a great deal of good there for you have a conscience, you are pure, incorruptible, sincere, honest in the whole acceptation of that word in a political sense, I know it now, but you need force, enthusiasm, abnegation and pious fanaticism to be the same man in prose that you are in verse! No, you never could be that. You are too much afraid of being eccentric or ridiculous; you are too submissive to convention, you think that you must speak to business-men in their character of business-men! You forget that outside their narrow, unhearing circle, the voice of a man of heart and genius resounds through space and can shake the world.

No! You will not dare! After having said the magnificent things with which your speeches are packed, your second thoughts (the second thoughts which justify M. Tallyrand's odious proverb so well) calm down the fervour which your audacities have excited and wipe out the letters of fire as if with a damp sponge. You will come to saying as in your own poem:

"Do not fear me, gentlemen, I am not a democrat, I am too much afraid of appearing to be a demagogue." No, you will not dare!

And it is not fear of inferior people which will hold

you back, but fear of a scandal and you will be afraid of those efficient little men who pose as Statesmen and say with a spiteful look: "He is crazy, ignorant and gross and flatters the people; he is only a poet, he is not a statesman of profound politics like ourselves." Like them! Like those men who are gorging themselves on wealth with one foot in the abyss of hell, never suspecting who has got hold of them ready to drag them below!

But even if the whole universe should fail to appreciate the courage of a great man; even if a blind and ungrateful populace should treat you as a madman, dreamer and simpleton. . . . But no! It is hopeless. You have not a tinge of fanaticism, and yet you ought to have it, you to whom God has spoken as He spoke from Sinai. You have a right of course to return to everyday life after that privilege, but you have not the right to *be* an ordinary man. You must of necessity carry within you the divine fire which radiated from the Divine Presence, in the midst of the icy torpor of this world where the hearts of the wicked languish and become paralysed.

You are already a man of intellect and a man of property. You have yet to become a man of virtue.

O Source of light and love! May your zeal devour the heart of this chosen among men!

TO HER SON MAURICE

(during the Revolution)

Paris, 10 *April*, 1848.

I hope you are sleeping like a top whichever way you lie and that if the rumours which ply round Paris get as far as the provinces, where they must assume terrific proportions, you will not believe a word of them. One hears that we are going to have the *year*

of the Terror over again! And other fables! Last night every district of Paris maintained that two guard-posts had been attacked and taken. That meant that many of the posts were removed altogether and there had not been so much as a cat stirring.

This morning the recall was beaten from earliest dawn. Then the orders were countermanded, but the National Guards were told to hold themselves in readiness however. Every hour some new *news* flew round! First, that Blanqui had been arrested! Then —Cabet had attacked the Town Hall! Cabet who has run away because he was afraid! Leroux has vanished altogether. I think he has gone back to Boussac. Raspail is pretending to be dead. Yet the authorities have been racking their brains as to how to get hold of these three men, trying to intercept them at the gates of Paris, and in all the clubs, at the offices of the Provisional Government, at Causidière's himself, and in all ranks of the National Guard.

At the Guards' barracks you hear that there is pillage going on, in the suburbs you hear that the Communists are entrenching themselves. It is a perfect farce! They have all tried to strike terror into each others' breasts, and everyone has been so successful that they are all in a permanent condition of fear.

I came home alone from the office by the rue de Grenelle last night at 2 a.m. and to-night I came back alone again at half-past one. There was the most beautiful moonlight. There was not a cat stirring in the streets, no one but the patrols posted at intervals of twenty yards. When a poor belated pedestrian does appear the patrols get ready to fire and eye the passer-by sternly. It is really a mania; it is very like the affair of '89, which explains it all to me. You know that no one was ever able to explain that and it was attributed to about twenty different causes. Well! Now I am convinced that all those causes

existed at once as they do to-day and that it was not due to one in particular.

In revolutions there always comes a moment when each side seeks to terrorise the other and so to prevent the adversary from acting. That is what is happening now to the four hidden conspiracies which I told you about yesterday. A fifth has been added to-day, and I believe there are two or three others. The Legitimists have tried to terrify the Republic; the moderate party, the Guizots, the Regency, the Thiers and the Girardins I am sure have all played the same game with or without any hope of bringing matters to a head.

But all these menaces paralyse each other. All the clubs stay open all night, armed and barricaded, not allowing any member to leave for fear he should be assassinated, and as they all have the same terror they all remain shut up with no sign of life, the remedy is thus to be found in the evil itself. There are hot-heads to be found who are of opinion that they ought to attack first, but as they are afraid of reprisals the defensive attitude is maintained. It is stupid, and the tragedy announced has been turned into a comedy.

I have just come away from old Ledru-Rollin, ready to hoist himself onto a huge charger to make a tour of Paris, laughing at the whole business. Etienne is very angry and says that it all sickens him. Borie and his cousin are shut up in the club of the Palais National and I am sure they are fuming for their own comfortable beds.

The population, as a whole, sleeps with one eye open, listening for the alarm-bell and the guns. M. de Lamartine who always wants to be in with everybody, has offered a refuge in his Government Office to the *great* Cabet who is posing as a martyr. Everyone is exclaiming: "We have been betrayed!"

Really the whole thing is superb! If you were here we would spend the rest of the night in the

streets to enjoy the spectacle of the general bewilderment. It is so complete that a great many serious men have fallen completely into the snare.

It only remains for me to pose as a victim as well. There has been an incredible outburst of fury against me on the part of the middle-classes because of a very strict *Bulletin* that I have issued. However, I am quite tranquil alone in your rooms ; but I could very well write to all the papers to-morrow like Cabet and the late Maret to say that I have not anywhere to lay my head.

To-morrow the Government will publish their big measures with regard to the progressive taxes, the financial laws, collateral heritage, etc. No doubt that will be the end of this panic and general welfare will emerge from general idiocy. So be it ! It will be the first act in a great play of which no one can foresee the end.

Good-night, my Bouli. Don't worry. I would write to tell you if a single gun were fired, so be quite comfortable about me. I saw Solange yesterday. She is very well. There is no fresh development in my own business. My Review is hardly attracting any notice : everyone is so pre-occupied, living from day to day.

Good-night again. I am listening for the clamour of civil war, and only hear the hours striking at the Louvre, and your weather-cock which is squeaking.

TO MAZZINI

(Part of the letter. He was in Milan)

15 *June*, 1848.

What are we to do, we who have consecrated our lives to the idea of equality and fraternity, who have ardently loved humanity and have adored in Christ the symbol of a redeemed people ? In a word, what are

the Socialists to do when no ideal lives in the hearts of men, when humanity abandons its own cause? Is not all this threatened and for to-morrow perhaps?

You have courage, friend, that is to say you do not lose hope. I keep my faith, the pure and brilliant star will always be in my heavens unless I become blind. But hope is the belief in the ultimate triumph of one's faith, and I should not be sincere if I did not admit that this disposition of my soul has been considerably modified in the last two months. I see civilised Europe rushing into the paths of the great struggles of life as if at the command of Providence. This vast movement is an immense progress after long years of stupor which marked a period of delay and took the form of the oppression of one part of society by another. This present movement is the effort of life itself, which *will* break out of the tomb, and will shatter the stone of the sepulchre even if it shatters itself at the same time. Therefore it would be insensate to despair, for if God has blown upon our dust to give it life, *He will not let it be dispersed to the four winds*. But are we rushing onward to a definite resurrection or only to a prophetic agitation, a precursory tremor of life, after which we shall fall into another period of drowsiness, a less heavy sleep it is true, but still paralysed by that fatal langour. I am afraid so.

* * * *

TO MADAME MARLIANI

Nohant, July, 1848.

Thank you, my friend, I should have been uneasy about you if you had not written for one trembles lest one should be obliged to add a tragedy, near one's heart, to the general disasters. One suffers and fears for everyone whom one loves. I am racked as there is, I am sure, no need to tell you, and I can no longer

believe in a Republic which begins by killing its own supporters. That is a very strange solution to the problem of poverty. It is pure Malthus!

Well really! You say that Miss Ashurst[1] has arrived in the middle of this tragedy. Poor child! She has come just in time to attend the funeral rites of our honour. She has come too late. She will not see the Republic. Embrace her for me. I am so pleased that she is with you and I feel quite certain that you will like each other. I wish I could come and give you both a kiss. But henceforward for some time on I shall not be in the state of mind to conduct myself quite *prudently* in Paris, so had better stay away, besides my presence here keeps a certain restraint over a considerable band of imbeciles at la Châtre who are always threatening to come and set this house on fire.

They are neither physically nor morally courageous and when they come over here to loiter round I go out amongst them and always find that their hats come off. But when they have passed me they pluck up enough courage to call out "*Down with the Communists!*" They are hoping to intimidate me and are at last coming to understand that they will never succeed. But still one never knows what lengths a dozen reactionary bourgeois might urge them to by repeating monstrous inventions about me. To give you an example, during the disturbance in Paris they positively asserted that I had given hiding-room to Ledru-Rollin, two hundred Communists and four hundred rifles!

Others better intentioned, but stupid also, rushed in here in the middle of the night to inform me that my house was surrounded with brigands and they were so sure of it themselves that they had brought a force of police with them. Fortunately the police are all on my side and will not go in for manias which might get me imprisoned without a trial, one of these fine days. The authorities are also upholding us, but

[1] One of Mazzini's London friends.

if they should get changed we might come in for some persecution. All my friends have left the district, quite wrongly in my opinion. One must face these little storms which are inevitable outbreaks of the general discomfort.

Good-night, my friend. What days of tears and indignation these have been! I am ashamed of being a Frenchwoman to-day, I who used to be so proud of it. Whatever happens I love you.

GEORGE.

TO MAZZINI

(then in London)

Nohant, 30th September, 1848.

Friend,

I don't know whether you ever received two letters which I wrote to you at Milan, one during the horrible events in Paris in June, and the other some time later. As I know that you are courageous and persevering enough to answer all the letters of those who love you, I presume that as I have no answer you did not get them.

God knows there are plenty of obstacles between us! But none of the European police can have any motive for confiscating our letters for we are of those whose conspiracies are always made in the light of day. But after all we live in times when many things are inexplicable! If you do get this letter, please let me know, if only by one line, telling me that you know you are always in my thoughts.

Fortunately I have had some news of you through Eliza Ashurst. Nearly all the letters that you wrote to her parents were sent on to her in Paris, whence she sent them to me here, and then finally I returned them to London. You see that your scraps of paper have a large circulation and are interesting to more than one

family. So in that way I have come to know about your misfortunes, your griefs and your agitations, but I had no need to read about them to appreciate them. I have only to look into my own heart to read your sufferings, and I know too, that you must have felt all mine. The events at Milan struck death into my heart just as the events of Paris must have been heart-rending for you. When people are fighting for their liberty the whole world becomes the fatherland of those who are serving the cause. But your situation is more logical and clearer than ours although it has the same elements as foundation. You have foreigners to deal with and the crimes of the foreigner are to be explained as the struggle between the true and the false. But what about us! We who had recovered everything in February and then lost all! and then took to cutting each other's throats without doing one hand's turn to help anybody. What an incredible spectacle for the world we must have been.

The bourgeoisie is getting the upper hand you say and it is not at all wonderful to find that egoism should be the order of the day. But why should the bourgeoisie get the upper hand when the people are the sovereigns, and the principle of their sovereignty, universal suffrage, still holds good? We must open our eyes and the sight of the reality is horrible.

The majority of the French people are blind, credulous, ignorant, ungrateful, malicious and stupid In a word they are mostly bourgeois. There is, of course, a sublime minority in the industrial towns and great centres without the smallest connection with the people of the country-side, and they are destined to be held down for a long period by the majority sold to the bourgeoisie. This minority carries the germ of our future people within it. It is the true martyr of humanity. But beside it and around it, the people, even those who sometimes fight for the minority can really only be called monarchists. We

who were not on the spot in June did believe that the workmen's quarters in Paris had struck a blow for the right to work. No doubt it was done instinctively but now we have the new elections coming on which will give us the statistics for formulated opinions. The majority goes to some wooer of the constituents, then to some Jew who buys votes, and finally, in a limited number, votes are given to the Socialists. And yet Paris is the brain and heart of the Socialists. On their side, the leaders of the Socialist party are neither saints nor heroes. They are tarnished with the littleness, and the vanity (which reaches immense proportions) of the reign of Louis-Philippe. None of the thinkers have been able to frame a formula of life. The majority in the Chamber votes the extinction of the people and the people do not raise the standard of the Republic in a mass. Some want an emperor and some want a king, and others want inflated prophets and seers and others want theocrats. No one feels clearly within himself what he is and what he ought to be. It is a terrifying confusion, complete moral anarchy and a diseased condition in which even the most courageous become discouraged and long for death.

There is no manner of doubt that life will arise from this dissolution of the past and whoever knows what the power of ideas may be, cannot have his faith shaken at any rate, in principle. But man has so short a day to spend here and abstractions can only satisfy cold souls. It is in vain that we know that the future will fulfil our ideals; we continue to struggle for that future which we shall never see. And what a sunless, joyless life is ours! What a heavy chain we carry! What deep vexations! What disgust! What sorrow That is the bread of tears that we are bound to eat. I shall have to admit that I cannot accept consolations and that hope irritates me. I know as well as anyone else that we must go forward, but those who tell me

that it is to be done in order to travel in person through smiling country-sides, are mere babes who feel assured that they will live to be centenarians. I would rather be left in my grief. I am strong enough to drink of that chalice and I do not want to be told that there is distilled honey within it when I know it to be the blood and tears of humanity.

I have seen your friend Eliza. She came to spend a few days here. We talked of you a great deal but I must tell you frankly that she made an entirely opposite impression on me to that which you made upon me. After having seen you I loved you more than before, while with her it was the contrary. She is a very good soul and very intelligent; she must have some great qualities. But she is infatuated with herself; she has that vice of the age, and it does not find me as tolerant as it used to do, since I have seen it gnawing like an evil worm at the most beautiful fruits and bringing its venom to every element which is capable of saving the world. I think that reading my novels has done her harm and may in a sense have contributed to her species of exaltation which has no resemblance to mine. The question of *man* and *woman* occupies her thoughts exclusively and this sex-business viewed as an acceptation of it in which the thought of sex-differences ought not to be dominating, effaces her notion of the *human being* which is always the same being, and does not need to be perfected either as man or woman but as a soul and a child of God. This pre-occupation of hers with sex results in a sort of hysterical condition of which she herself is not aware, but it exposes her to being the dupe of the first swindler who turns up. I believe her conduct to be perfectly chaste but I doubt whether her mind is, and that is worse perhaps. I would rather she had lovers and never mentioned it, than that she lived without any, and talked about them all the time. So that after talking to her I felt as if I had got indigestion from

eating something that had disagreed with me. I was on the point of telling her so and perhaps it was my duty to do so. But I perceived that it was going to irritate her and I did not feel sure that I should be paining her to any useful purpose.

For the rest, she has a sort of adoration for you, a cult for which you ought to be grateful; it is deep and sincere. But still in speaking of you she made me very impatient without knowing it. She wanted to have my opinion of *the way in which you regard women!* and in order to disembarrass myself of such a foolish question I told her rather brusquely that you did not appear to like them at all; that you had not time to think about them, and that *men* or rather *human beings* came first in your thoughts, in a way which includes both sexes from a higher standpoint than that of individual passions.

Thereupon she became exceedingly animated and began to discuss you as a hero of romance, which wounded and annoyed me more than I can say.

In fact she is a thorough Englishwoman, a prude without modesty; and she is also a thorough Englishman, for a type of mind has no sex and every Englishman thinks himself the finest unit of the finest nation in the world.

And yet I feel that one owes indulgence to these happy beings who can still find a refuge from the unhappy times in the little satisfactions and the little illusions of *amour-propre*. We are very much to be pitied who can no longer live as individuals but are in travail amongst humanity like waves in a storm-tossed sea.

You have seen your mother and sister again; you have always that prized consolation.

I will not speak of my domestic sorrows. They are always the same and will never change. At least my home is tranquil and sweet to me; my son is always reliable and very good to me and the other two

children that you know about are industrious and affectionate under my wing. I ask nothing of God for myself, I do not even ask Him to preserve me from the shattering griefs which come to me from outside. I entreat Him not to allow others to suffer as I do. But that is asking more than His terrible law will accord to our unhappy race.

Good-bye, friend. I love you.

G. Sand.

TO HER SON MAURICE

Nohant, May 13, 1849.

My child,

I think you ought to come home; you can easily go back again if nothing that everyone is dreading does happen at present. I am not foolishly anxious but I can see perfectly well both from the newspapers and the letters I receive that the situation is more strained than it has ever been before. I see that power is absolutely bound to return to the hands of one. Such events will occur that the collective being which we call the people composed of a thousand ideas and a thousand diverse passions will not be able to keep up their miraculous calmness, their unity as of one man, in the face of the insensate provocations of a faction which is playing its last card. It will be a terrific struggle; there will be so many different hostile camps that no one can foresee the issue and there will perhaps be more horrible misconceptions and bloodier blunders than in June. If the Red Republic decides to strike it will be to the death; for the European Republic is joining hands with it against the European absolutism. That is how I read the matter and it may explode at any moment. You do not read the papers perhaps; but if you followed the stormy debates in the Assembly you would see that

every day and every hour gives birth to some incident which is like a torch thrown into a powder-magazine.

Come home, I beg of you! For I have only you in the whole world and your end would be mine. I might still perhaps be of some use to the cause of truth, but if I lost you—then good-bye everybody! I have not the stoicism of Barbés and Mazzini. It is true that they are men and that they have no children. Moreover in my opinion it is not by fighting, by civil war that we shall win the cause of humanity in France. We have obtained universal suffrage[1] and woe to us if we cannot succeed in making use of it, for it will be our only permanent road to freedom and the only legitimate reason for taking up arms would be the withdrawal of our right to vote. But will the people, crushed by poverty, brutalised by the police and infinitely provoked by the political infamy of reactionaries, be able to acquire the really superhuman logic and patience to await the unanimity of its moral forces? Alas! I am afraid not! It will have recourse to physical force. It may win, but at such a risk that no one who really loves it could advise it to take that step. If one is neither for nor against it one must certainly not be in Paris. So if you believe what I say, come back! I feel sure it is time you did. Bring Lambert with you. I advise him to come and I should be happier if you were all under my eye.

I kiss you, my child, and beg you to keep me in your thoughts.

TO MADEMOISELLE R—— L——

(An authoress, unknown to her personally)

Nohant, October, 1849.

Mademoiselle,

If you are in a hurry for my opinion I am quite despairing because I am obliged to number the

[1] It is to be noted that not even George Sand at that date had any idea of the desirability of giving votes to women.

manuscript you have sent me, 153. That is to say I have 153 manuscripts to read which have been sent to me in the last six months by persons unknown to me and it is the same thing every year.

As I am forced to work at the fulfilment of various *duties* I can only be terribly in arrears with these manuscripts. And if I had read the whole one hundred and fifty-three, what could I do about them? Can I find 153 publishers? Could I place 153 manuscripts in the Independent Review, which is the only journal with whose director I am personally acquainted. I have already sent him at least one hundred manuscripts and I doubt whether he has any more time to read them than I have. Probably if he chooses one he will choose the best, and I am most desirous that it should be yours. But in any case I am bound to have 152 fresh enemies this year, who will be thinking either that I am jealous for my own fame threatened by their success, or that I am jealous of other writing-women.

This faculty of being an author is spread about to such an extent that in order to satisfy it in others, I should be obliged to keep four or five examining secretaries whom I cannot afford to pay, so I must needs submit myself to all the resentment that my powerlessness arouses, and bear patiently all the threats, insults and recriminations which follow as a natural consequence. Please forgive this hasty communication, Mademoiselle; you are the seventh I have written to to-day and I have no time to frame my excuses as I could wish them to appear.

G. Sand.

If you are thinking of fetching your manuscript away and you find me out, which is probable, please ask for No. 153. They are all docketed in order.

TO MONSIEUR X . . .

(An author, unknown to her, who had taken upon himself to write and publish a biography of George Sand)

Nohant, January, 1850.

Monsieur,

While thanking you for your kind attention and for a great deal of praise which you have bestowed on me, allow me to rectify several statements which appear in your life of me, and have absolutely no foundation in fact. I have gleaned fragments of them from reading reviews of your book, in the newspapers.

Like everyone else, I know just how little importance is to be attached to these contemporary biographies built up by induction, deduction and supposition, all more or less ingenious and more or less gratuitous. My biography in particular has absolutely no chance of being accurate when proceeding from the pen of a ready writer with whom I have not the honour of being acquainted, who has never received any kind of communication from me, or from anyone who really knows me.

These contemporary biographies may have some value as a literary criticism, but as historical documents one may perfectly well state that they have no existence. I could easily prove it by running through your book on myself, from beginning to end. It does not contain one accurate statement. Not even my name or age are correct. I am not called Marie, and I was not born in 1805 but in 1804. My grandmother never lived at Abbaye-aux-Bois. My father was not a colonel. My grandmother ranked the Gospels high above the Social Contract. When I was fifteen I could neither shoot nor ride, I was at school in a convent. My husband was neither old nor bald. When we were married he was twenty-seven years old

and had a quantity of thick hair. No Bordeaux shipowner of any description was ever smitten with passion for me. You are simply romancing when you write about *the twentieth chapter of a celebrated romance.* It would be fatally easy to construct fictitious lives of authors from their own novels, and they would have to be very artless and very clumsy if they did introduce personal emotions and situations from their own lives into their books without surrounding them with fiction which would completely defeat the reader anxious to track down real people and events.

What you say about M. Roret is all to his honour and I can well believe him capable of it, but he could never have brought me a thousand francs after one of my successes, while tearing up the original agreement, because I have never made an agreement with him, of any sort, or kind.

Neither M. de Kératry nor M. Rabbe were asked to give an opinion on *Indiana* by M. Delatouche. M. Delatouche always formed his own opinions. And what is more he was totally unacquainted with M. de Kératry. After my success with Indiana I did not take a flat or give receptions. I inhabited the same garret for five or six years and saw no one but my intimate friends.

I now come to the first of the statements which I am absolutely bent on demolishing. I make very little of those which have gone before. Allow me to quote your words, Monsieur :

" *Intoxicated by her success she was guilty of forgetfulness of the faithful companion of the early days of struggle. Cut to the heart, Sandeau set out for Italy alone, on foot, and penniless.*"

Allow me to state that M. Jules Sandeau never set out for Italy on foot and penniless. Although you appear to insinuate that if he were without money it was my fault, let me point out that it is not a possible presumption that if we had quarrelled he would have

accepted a loan from me. This injurious supposition you cannot have intended. I must assure you and if necessary he will assure you himself, that he had resources, earned by himself. Secondly, he did not go away with a broken heart : I have letters from him as much to his credit as my own, which prove the contrary : letters which I have no reason to publish, knowing as I do that he speaks of me in them with the affection and esteem which I was worthy to receive. I shall not defend Monsieur de Musset from your insults, because I know he is quite capable of defending himself, and for the moment I am dealing with myself ; that is why I shall simply confine myself here to saying that I never confided to anyone what you think you know about his conduct to me and that in consequence you have been led astray by someone who made these inventions. You say that I never met M. de Musset again after our journey in Italy ; but you are mistaken ; I met him often and we never met without shaking hands. I do hold by the satisfaction of affirming that I have never cherished bitterness against anyone, just as I never gave cause for lasting or justified bitterness in anyone, not even my husband, M. Dudevant.

You certainly never met me in company with M. de Lamennais either in the forest of Fontainebleau or in any other part of the world. I beg your pardon a thousand times, but I must be allowed to declare that you knew neither of us by sight at the date when you allege that you had this singular encounter which I admit you have described in a very lively manner. I have never walked a step, out-of-doors, with M. de Lamennais, whom I have always seen confined to his rooms in poor health. And now that we are on the subject of M. de Lamennais, this is the second fact that I am bent on demolishing. You say that later on when the Editor-in-chief of the *Monde* (Lamennais) was mentioned I gave vent to the exclamation : " *Oh, be quiet ! It was like meeting the devil !*"

I solemnly affirm, Monsieur, that whoever reported this alleged remark to you has burdened his conscience with a hideous lie. My *intimacy* with M. de Lamennais (as you are pleased to term my respectful relations with that illustrious man) never once changed character. You say that *George Sand was not long in breaking off an intimacy which could never have become serious but for want of something better to do, or through curiosity.* There could be no idle curiosity in connection with M. de Lamennais except that which seized you when you write in such a way of a man who is simply one of the purest glories of the century.

My admiration and veneration for the author of *Sayings of a Believer* always have been, and will remain boundless. Proof would not be difficult to furnish and would instantly meet your eye if you had time and patience to read all my writings.

I will now pass over a goodly number of minor inaccuracies which have at least provided me with many a hearty laugh (not at you, of course, Monsieur, but at those persons who make a pretension of being able to furnish facts about living personages) and come to this phrase. "*Her ears were closed whenever he referred to a direct application of his system.*"

I know this is not meant for a calumny, but it is gratuitous ridicule of a man of M. de Lamennais's high standing. Could you not have found a victim less sacred than an old man on the edge of the grave, and a noble philosopher in exile? When you come to reflect upon it I am sure that you will regret having too freely indulged that leaning towards irony which is at once the strength and weakness and misfortune of the youth of France to-day.

Allow me to tell you that a certain playful episode which you relate concerning a M. Kador with whom I am not acquainted, is a pretty one, but quite untrue. Then again modesty constrains me to tell you that I do not improvise "quite as well as Liszt," who is my

friend, but has never been my master; he has never given me lessons and I cannot improvise at all. The same feeling of modesty obliges me to add that many a guest has dined comfortably at my table in a working-blouse and that I myself am neither so elegant nor so charming as you suppose. It costs me something certainly, to contradict you in that respect, but I am sure that it is all the same to you and that in taking me for the heroine of a witty romance of which you are the author, all you really care about is the display of the talent and imagination with which you are gifted.

G. Sand.

TO MAZZINI

Nohant, 4 *August*, 1850.

Dear,

I received only too short a visit from your pretty, young friend Caroline. I heard that her sister has been, or was expecting to be, with you lately. How fortunate these Englishwomen are in being able to run about wherever their hearts lead them! That must have given you a little happiness and consolation. There is no need to tell you that you are loved, venerated and esteemed, but you are susceptible to affection because you feel it yourself.

I thought Caroline charming. She tells me that Eliza is really quite happy. They know Louis Blanc in London and he has great respect and affection for the whole family.

Eliza said something about a newspaper that you want me to write for. I will do my utmost, but henceforward I doubt whether anything sensible will emanate from my pen. I am writing my Memoirs because in that way I am able to live in the past. One no longer *lives* in France, but one seems struck dumb

in a stupor upon the edge of an abyss, without being able to make a single movement of escape. Fortunately this very stupor prevents the forward movement which would hurl one into the abyss, but how sadly and slowly life passes in this position.

To endure it without misunderstanding Providence, or cursing human destiny is as much as I can do. One's consciousness of artistic power I set at naught, and if one still has the face of nature for inspiration, it is all one has, for I do not think that any of the events now passing before our eyes could inspire one.

Pain renders one dumb; indignation is the only vital cord of my heart nowadays, but the Press has been gagged and I, for one, have not the art of suppressing one half of what I feel. I have been roundly reproached for my silence during the past year, but it is not my business to break it. I am not in action, I have lost my illusions, I am wanting in the kind of personality which can intoxicate itself, as most men are, and I am entirely without responsibility in life, while it has been your fate to accept grave and terrible responsibility.

I have never been able to understand how poets can write verses on the tombs of their mothers and children. I cannot be eloquent over the tomb of my country. Sorrow contracts my heart as soon as I take up a pen. Serenity and cheerfulness are easy enough amongst one's own family. But sorrow like joy strikes deep within me as soon as I think of the public.

That cold and cowardly public which has allowed liberty to be assassinated and has sullied the eternal city which has become holy again. That blind, ungrateful, egoistic public which remains unmoved by the exploits of Hungary and is not even stirred by the efforts of Russia and Austria, is it to be awakened by any book, journal or article under the sun? It would however be a duty to pursue that task by all

available means. There are other duties besides, and I am not neglecting them. I will refer to them later. As for writing, debating and preaching I feel that the mission of the men of letters of this day is finished or adjourned in France, that the most sincere among them are the most taciturn. This is because it is impossible to live and feel in isolation. We are not instruments which can play ourselves. Be we only barrel-organs, we need someone to turn the handle. That hand, that exterior impulse, the wind which wafts music from Aeolian harps, is the collective feeling, the life of humanity which is communicated to the instrument, to the artist.

Believe me, those who are always giving voice, and always singing of themselves, are egoists who only live by their own lives. A sad life, that which is not an emanation of collective life! An example of this is that poor Lamartine, always full of phrases, always ingenious in contradictory appreciations, always rich in words and poor in ideas and principles; he buries himself in jabber and entombs his real glory, and also perhaps his honour within the prostituted facility of his eloquence.

Was not that what you meant yourself when you told me that it is utterly useless to write for the present? But you think we should always be writing for the future. That is what you must do when your days of retirement come, whatever you say against it! You have deeds to relate and your life belongs to history and nothing is so valuable as the word of the historian who has lived history before writing it. Your deeds and proclamations are already the property of the public I know, but your intimate thoughts, your hopes, your griefs, your periods of depression even, must all continue to educate posterity. The swooning of Jesus under the olive-trees, the tears of Joan of Arc as she walked to her torture typify the eternal tenderness and enthusiasm of loving souls. There is

an intimate glow within us which we should allow to be seen, when it is pure. Therefore, I hope you will write your life. It would be moreover, the history of the martyrdom of the greatest hearts of modern Italy, and no one could plait the crown of thorns, which is their due, as you can.

Your friends hope to see you back in England in a few months. When shall we see you again in France? Adieu, dear friend. Write to me if you have time. If you have not, don't trouble. I know that your heart never sleeps. The only thing I am bent on is to have knowledge that you are alive and well and not suffering too much, and to be conscious that *you* know that I love you tenderly and for ever.

I have received the book you told me about. It is a magnificent and precious historical document.

TO ALEXANDRE DUMAS FILS

(Who had been the means of restoring to her a packet of her letters to Alfred de Musset)

Nohant, Aug. 1850.

I have not been able to thank you in person, Monsieur, and you will make me quite sad if you do not give me that pleasure some day at Nohant, that is to say, in the country, where one feels in better condition of mind and body in one day, than one could achieve in Paris in a whole year. I am not sure of being there before the end of the month. I have been delayed by illness and am in bed.

If you could come between this and the 25th I should be so pleased and grateful. If you cannot do so, will you be so kind as to send the packet to M. Falampin (please forgive the worthy man's name, I am not responsible for it), rue Louis le Grand, 33.

But I will not abandon the hope of seeing you here with your father. He told me a little while ago that he would do his best on condition of being rewarded by a hearty kiss. Tell him that I am come to an age when I shall not trouble to deprive him or myself of such a sincere mark of friendship and that I will receive him with open arms. If you both have to deprive me of these pleasures, then au revoir until we meet in Paris, next month, if you have not then started back to Silesia or some other quarter of the globe. Before thanking you for your great goodness to me I really must offer my absolutely disinterested thanks for the charming book that I am now reading. It is so touching to meet Charlotte and Manon and Virginie and all those beings, over whom one has shed so many tears! The idea is new and very singular and yet as one reads, it seems quite natural. You could not have unwound the plot more simply or more adroitly. If you keep Paul and Virginie pure and faithful, as I hope you will, I shall be doubly grateful for this book. You have also succeeded in making Goethe live and speak without putting one's back up. In real life he could not have been better, and you give him all the mind and all the greatness that he must have had. I can imagine that there has been some outcry at the audacity of your subject; but up to now, I have not discovered anything which profanes, lowers or vulgarizes those beloved and much admired types. I am awaiting the end with impatience.

Adieu once more, and may we meet soon somehow or other.

Yours very sincerely,

GEORGE SAND.

TO EDMUND PLANCHUT

(An unknown admirer of her work)

Nohant, 11 *April*, 1851.

Your letter touched me deeply, monsieur, and I am ready to see the hand of Providence in the services which you have been able to render to my family, something providential between God, you and myself. I am not in the habit of answering that host of idle and useless letters which are always addressed to anyone with a known position in the Arts, letters which time and rational consideration will not allow one to treat seriously. But the first that I received from you proved to me by its modesty and sagacity that here was one of those rare exceptions which one is so happy to signalise; and in so far as it was possible I have responded to the generous and discreet appeals of your delicate and well-balanced intelligence. I have been doubly glad of it on learning to-day that my esteem and sympathy have assured you the esteem and sympathy of a man who has been generous to those in misfortune.[1]

I do beg that you will inform Monsieur Francisco Cardozzo of Mello, if he is still on the island of Cap-Vert, that I am half responsible for the gratitude that he bears you. Gratitude is due to him from me because it is partly on my account that he treated you so well. But his good heart was the prime motive of his good action and your goodness will be its own reward. If my feelings could add something to it please express them to him.

You do not tell me what you are going to do at Manilla. Yet you must believe that I take an interest in all that concerns you, and that I should have great satisfaction in hearing your news. I envy you the youth and freedom which allows you to make these wonderful journeys, interwoven no doubt with

[1] After the wreck of the *Rubens* on the rocks of the island of Bona-Vista.

dangers, sufferings and disasters, which are so grandly compensated for, by the vast spectacles of nature and the riches of all Creation. I expect that you take a great many notes and that you keep a journal which will help you to give a full account of your travels.

These vast excursions, however we may look upon them (and the best thing to do is to look at them from all quarters at once) always hold a powerful interest and you will find many resources of your future in them. Take an interest in natural history; even if you are not very well up in it, your collections and observations would have their own usefulness. Please bring me back some butterflies and insects; the humblest and most paltry would mean riches to me; and as I know some collectors I could introduce you to some interesting people when you come back.

The best way of bringing back butterflies and insects is to put off setting them up. When the butterfly has been killed and has a long pin through its body its wings close up and it dries in that position. One can thus bring back a number, set side by side in a small box, and if they are securely packed and are not touching each other there is no risk of damage. On arrival they can be softened, opened and spread out by very simple processes, which I will undertake. You must stick a little piece of camphor at each end of your box. You can also bring back chrysalises of butterflies and insects in bran. A good number of them die or fail to hatch out on the journey, but there are always a few which can be hatched out here by artificial heat and produce superb specimens.

But I am far more bent on news of you, than butterflies, and if I can be useful to you in any way whatsoever, please remember me.

Adieu monsieur. My best wishes go with you, and I pray God that they may still bring you good luck.

Yours sincerely,

GEORGE SAND.

TO PRINCE JEROME NAPOLEON[1]

Paris, 3 January, 1852.

Prince,

I looked upon your visit to one ailing and no longer young, as a proof of so much goodness of heart and readiness to please that I have not ventured to ask you to repeat it.

My daughter tells me that I did wrong to doubt the frank sympathy with which you would have accepted my invitation. Please believe that I never lose faith in you, and to prove it I am emboldened to tell you that if this poor house and sad face do not scare you away, both would be revivified and cheered by your good friendship.

Once more many courteous salutations.

GEORGE SAND.

TO PRINCE LOUIS-NAPOLEON BONAPARTE
(President of the Republic)

Paris, February 3rd, 1852.

Prince,

During an interview in which enbarrassment and emotion made me more voluable than I intended, I received from you words of so much kindness that they will never be forgotten. You were good enough to say to me: "Ask any special favour that you desire of me!"

I had the honour of replying that for the moment I was not authorised by anyone to make a petition to you. I had seen no one in Paris then, for my first visit was to you. I was only able to be importunate on one subject: the arrests carried out in my province, of which the consequences do not seem serious to me since no real insurrection has broken out there, and even supposing the existence of a plan of resistance, it

[1] See note 1, p. 258.

would surely be impossible to wish to apply chastisement to a thought, which has never been carried into action. I might have feared that it would be when I left the province, where the authorities seemed to have adopted the policy of alarming and disaffecting the rural population by uncalled-for restrictions. But when you gave me such a gentle and humane reply I could no longer feel uneasy and there was no step left for me to take for the benefit of my provincial neighbours of the Indre than to endeavour to hasten the day of their release by my pressure on the Government.

But though I am flattering myself that it will be easy to obtain pardon for the men who have not been convicted of anything, I am not altogether free from alarm for the fate of those for whom it has been decided otherwise, in the most rigorous manner. I have seen two men to-day whom I know to be completely innocent in the matter of conspiracy, if it is that which is to be punished, . . . if it is not for their opinions, . . . but surely that is impossible, unheard of in our system of morals and customs, in the ideas of our generation; a hundred times impossible in the heart of Prince Louis-Napoleon. I found them resigned to their fate and believing, thanks to the system of excessive punishment which you have just suppressed, that they had received this blow for their principles and not for their acts? I entirely discouraged this supposition which was intensely painful to me after what I had heard you say. I repeated that I had faith in you that personal rancour was unknown to the heart of a man filled as you are with the consciousness of a high mission, far superior to the passions and resentments of vulgar politics.

I told them that I would go and beg you for their pardon or the commutation of their sentences. They refused at first, but they agreed when they understood the depth of my conviction. They authorised me to

take advantage of the generous offer you had made to me, which made me regret so much that I could not at the moment make use of it.

Now you would not respect those two men, if I were to tell you that they had retracted their principles or abandoned their deepest feelings. They always have been, they always will be entire strangers to any plot, or secret society, and the absolute form of your Government cannot leave you any apprehension of the public emission of doctrines which you would not tolerate.

I take the debt of gratitude upon myself. You know that on my part it will be deep and sincere. Do not disdain a feeling which indeed is rare in this world, that you more often find among the defeated perhaps than among those who are taking advantage of the victory. Prince, I remember having written to you when you were at Ham, that you would be Emperor, one day, and that when that day came you would hear no more of me. To-day you stand millions of times higher than an Emperor of Germany or Russia and yet you find me coming to you with petitions. Let me be proud of having perjured myself!

Perhaps it may not enter into your policy of the moment to let it be perceived that you accorded the commutation of two socialist political offenders to me, the socialist writer. If that were the case, please believe in my honour, believe that I would keep the secret. I will tell no one the object of this letter and am quite satisfied to be proud of your kindness in the secrecy of my own heart. I should never announce the happy result of it, if that be your will.

GEORGE SAND.

P.S. If you do not reject my petition deign to let me know at what hour you could grant me an interview when I can give you the names of the two men I am pleading for.

GEORGE SAND.

TO HER DAUGHTER SOLANGE CLÉSINGER

(This letter is an answer to a letter from Solange from a pension in Paris where she was staying during the course of the proceedings for a separation from her husband.)

Nohant, 25 *April*, 1852.

I see you are down in the dumps, my poor thing! Come, come! That will soon be over like everything else which happens to you. It seems to me that as you have had that unexpected victory (quite unhoped for by me, I must admit), since you will recover your little daughter in a few days and can bring her here and stay if you like until the news that the law-suit is over reaches you, I do not think that you need be in despair about a few days spent in a dismal room; for I see that is weighing on you more than anything for the moment. But really it is not a mortal grief! As you know I myself have lived and worked *alone* a great deal between four *dingy walls* during the *best years of my youth* and it is not that which I regret having experienced and accepted.

The isolation that you complain of is another matter. It is inevitable for the moment and is a natural sequence of the attitude you have adopted. Your husband (whose character is intolerable, I daresay) is perhaps not worth so much hatred and such a fiery rupture. I do consider that the separation might have been carried out in a different fashion, with greater dignity and more prudence and patience. However you willed it and it is an accomplished fact and I will not return to saying that it should not have been, since it *has* been. But I do not think you can reasonably complain of the immediate results of a resolution which you arrived at alone without considering the *relations*, *friends* and *child* whose absence you are now feeling. The existence of the *child*

should have given you patience, your *friends* would have wished you to be patient, and the *relations* (by whom of course you mean *me*) were intensely anxious that the moment should be better chosen, the motives better substantiated, and the manner of carrying it through, gentler and more generous. Solange, you always try to swallow iron bars and you are always astonished to find that you cannot digest them. Personally I think you are very lucky not to have worse indigestion than you do. I cannot see that you are justified in complaining so bitterly of everybody and I cannot see that the friends that you were bent on making by living far away from me in society, have been any more faithful to you than the friends you have through me,and I cannot see that Clothilde, whom you call *the only relation I have left*, has much to congratulate herself upon in receiving this favour from you, for did she not offer you a refuge in circumstances from which most people would have recoiled, in dread of trying scenes with your husband, from which chance alone preserved her. Also I cannot see that Lambert (whom you recently tried to push into a duel with your husband in which he must have been killed) has not shown you in the little sphere of assistance which he can command, a great deal of kindness and devotion. He is not one of my old friends who would have been ready to forgive your feelings towards me and would have welcomed you as they used to do, if you had not repelled all idea of owing them any gratitude or respect. The number of them is not great it is true, and they are not people of importance or great position. That is not my fault, or rather it followed from my choosing my friends according to my own simple tastes and my instincts for peace and retirement. So that really your greatest misfortune consists in being my daughter, but I am powerless to change that and you really must face it once and for all.

As for the friends that you have made since your marriage and separation from me, I cannot believe that they are all detestable and that they are all to blame in not supporting your rupture with your husband.

Bourdet has certainly been severe to you, but he had some reason to be; I do not see how I can be to blame in the matter and I am not at all certain that you could not have managed to retain his support. His family was fond of you. I have seen his wife crying over your difficulties and his mother-in-law always spoke of you with the greatest solicitude. And then in spite of all his displeasure with the details of your conduct, the Comte d'Orsay has remained a most paternal friend to you, with sarcastic comments flying all round which it pains me to feel you are the object of. His sister was most kind and well-disposed to you, but you detest her. You have met a great many people in brilliant positions, the people you always want to cultivate, there is Madame de Girandin among others. Why is it that you cannot find support in the world into which you launched yourself and to which I am necessarily a stranger? Is the whole human race detestable and can you be the only specimen of perfection? Are you the victim of universal injustice or of your own character which is full of scorn and inconstancy. You exact all from others while expecting to give nothing yourself.

Think it over, and if the evil is indeed rooted in yourself, you are the only person who can cure it in the future. It is in vain to complain to me of boredom and desertion. I cannot force people to like you if you will not be amiable. If your brother is not your best friend and constant companion which would be the only means of preserving the happiness of us three, is it because he is a monster of egoism? I who have lived with him for thirty years without one serious cloud coming between us, cannot think so. He is not faultless any more than you are, but I have often seen

him shed tears over your injustice to him which shows that he has some natural affection for you even when he is rough to you, and you have often told him that you hate him. True, that was when you were in a rage, but in calmer moments you have never said either to him or to me that you love him, and it is easy to see that you have never loved him. What it comes to is really that anyone who loves you must be content with being merely tolerated. You seem incapable of affection! You are not conscious what your real misfortune is, but it is betrayed in your soul's weariness and isolation and you complain of those who have deserted you without understanding that you yourself have wounded and repelled everybody.

The consolation you need is money, a great deal of money! You expect to forget the void in your heart in luxury, idleness and gaiety! But in order to give you as much as that, I should be obliged to work twice as hard as I work already, that is to say I should be dead in six months, for I am already working far beyond my strength. If I were to die in six months you would not be rich long, for you and your brother will certainly not be rich on what I can leave you, so there would be little use in that. Moreover, even if I could live at that pressure for a few more years, is it certain that it is my duty towards you to live as a galley slave or a beast of burden in order to provide you with pleasure and luxury?

No such contention can be proved and therefore allow me to tell you that it is not only the *fear of upsetting my own little pleasures* which prevents me from embarking on this stupid form of suicide which would be monstrous if only in Maurice's eyes; it is the consciousness of a more serious duty to perform for having failed to make you a happy and reasonable woman, I find that the duty of providing pleasure for you clashes with all my other duties in this world. Therefore let us sum up my financial position and your

own. For three, we have only independent means amounting to seven thousand francs a year. All the rest is dragged out of my brain, and my vitals, my burnt-up veins and my worn and straining nerves. I will give you as much as I can. You are free to be at home here so long as you do not make trouble by your follies and bring us to despair by your unwarrantable behaviour. I will keep your little girl here and bring her up as long as ever you like, but I will not be affected by your complaints of what you put up with in Paris. I shall not allow them to vex me however well I appreciate them, for I have adopted a certain attitude towards anything which cannot be altered, one only struggles when there is any hope of affecting an improvement. I know very well that you will always consider me the cause of all your misfortunes. I am not rich enough, I am not *grande dame*, I give away too much money ; I will not deprive myself of Maurice's society enough, the *enfant chéri* as you call him,[1] in order to adorn your life with horses to ride and a large dress allowance.

Perhaps I shall have the infamy to love and respect Augustine[2] and to have her to stay with me in the holidays. Yes, I have no doubt I shall be guilty of all these crimes ! And I can count on your reproaching me with them directly or indirectly. You will always be able to find some gossiping confidants like Mademoiselle de Rozières to put it about in a certain little world of scandal-mongers (where I have enemies because my upright standards annihilate their peccadilloes) that you are the victim of my desertion, of my preference for my son and that sly little minx Augustine, who actually dares to be very poor without complaining of it, to work like a nigger, at fifty sous a ticket, in a little provincial town, and to be happy with

[1] Maurice Sand never adopted a profession he could live on. He lived with his mother and dabbled in painting, play-production and geology.

[2] George Sand's niece already referred to, who had now married a man in some small position in a provincial town.

her husband and child, and to bless me as if I had made her a millionairess. What can I do? Life has its dark sides, I know them, I have suffered from them and whatever I do or say you will not be wealthy or better placed in society.

Open your eyes then! You are no fool and however much you enflate your personality your conscience will always cry out to you that he who will not sacrifice himself cannot command the sacrifices of others. The future lies before you and you must no longer look forward to a future of riding-parties, fine apartments, leisure, gossip and indolence and giving yourself airs; it will be a future in retirement, devoted to household cares, assiduous supervision and education of your daughter, work if you find any you can do, if not, strict economy, the most austere simplicity in some small corner of Paris, poor indeed and wretched compared to what you have dreamed of. The only other course open to you is country life with your relations, but there, you will not have entirely your own way, for your relations must retain the upper hand in their own house and will not endure a *cortège* here which they might be accused of having encouraged.

That is the future of a woman whose marriage has turned out unfortunately, as much by her own fault as by other people's, who has determined to smash up her marriage violently at the first hint of suffering without previously assuring herself of support or taking anyone's advice. But this future may be made to repair everything. It may be made the future of a good woman who has really reflected when it is too late, and has made a grand effort of heart, conscience and courage to regain the affections she has thrown away, the approbation she disdained. She will be able to feel the growth of her soul in this simple form of life; her soul will rise, she could become an artist, she could feel or create, both of which are equally

delightful and fortifying, which do not depend on material pleasures and are quite independent of the world of money and the empty excitements which that can procure. The purified soul should and can attain to the only real joys of life. In such a situation a lovely, intelligent and charming child like Nini[1] will be a treasure whose value no one could ignore who will make up to you for everything. Then you will have good true friends who will not be constrained to admire you for your ribbons and perfumes, but will respect you and cherish you for your true beauty, that of your soul and conduct.

But there is another future, and your reflections upon "women of heart and intelligence," who succumb sometimes, "like badly-brought-up girls to pleasure and vice," make me fear that your husband was not always lying when he maintained that you had made certain threats.

If your husband is mad, you too, are rather crazy, my poor girl, at certain moments, and you neither know what you are thinking or saying at those moments. You must have been passing through one of those moments when you wrote me that strange paradox.

No, women of heart and intelligence never succumb to the attractions of vice. For it only has attractions to those who have neither heart nor judgment. That is the question judged on its own merits in the terms in which you propounded it. If you often talked such nonsense I am not surprised that you caused an explosion in the brain of Clésinger. A mother reads such words with pity, but in a husband they can only rouse fury and despair.

Do you really find it difficult to be poor and isolated without seeking the means of distraction in vice? You find it very difficult to *keep up heart* because you

[1] Solange's daughter Jeanne, who died at the age of six. That Solange was devoted to her is proved by her own tomb which by her own desire bears only the words: *Solange Sand-Clésinger. Mère de Jeanne.*

have been twenty-four hours between *four walls* and can hear *women laughing and horses galloping outside! What misery!* as Maurice would say.

The real misery is to have a mind which can entertain any such idea for a moment. Your line of reasoning is simply, "I must either have happiness or be wicked!" Since when has the lack of happiness become a pretext for a want of dignity? In what code of morals or treatise on Chinese Religion have you read the precept that human beings have no choice between suffering and shame, and that there is no consolation in suffering without lowering one's flag.

Is there a creature on earth so precious, so different from others, so excellent in its own eyes that it is entitled to say: "My right to happiness is so overweening that if it is not satisfied I shall satisfy it myself by any means."

Please do not write such nonsense again. I do not want to take it seriously like your madman of a husband, whom you used to regard as a fool rather than dread as a tyrant. I take no notice of such utter rubbish. Just try it and see! I am not a bit afraid to challenge you, for you would not cross the threshold when it came to the point to go on such a quest for luxury, to seek it in the forgetfulness of your natural pride. Now moral suicide is like physical suicide. When one has not the slightest intention of committing it one should not threaten it to anyone, neither mother nor husband. It is not so easy as you think to dishonour oneself. A woman has to be more extraordinarily beautiful or witty than you are, to be pursued or even sought out by intending purchasers. Or else, a woman must be something of a rascal, to know how to make herself desired, by feigning passion or libertinage and all sorts of things of which, thank God, you do not know even the first word.

The men, who want to spend their money in that way, require women who know how to earn it, and

that science would raise in your heart such a violent disgust that no negotiation would last long.

Therefore, do abstain in future from all such bravado, aspiration and regrets. You speak of it as a blind man speaks of colours. You will always be proud and virtuous in spite of yourself; you must take it for granted and not make a merit of it. You must be careful of these real attacks of craziness. Let me be the only one to know of them. I have seen many young women struggling against passions of the heart and senses, and terrified by domestic miseries, in the fear of being carried away involuntarily. But I have never met a single one brought up as you have been, having lived in an atmosphere of dignity and moral freedom who has dreaded privation and isolation for the same dangerous reasons that you allude to.

A woman of heart and intelligence does not even know that such dangers exist. However strong she be, she may fear to be carried away by love, but never by cupidity. Do you know that if I had been the presiding judge in your case, and if I had had the opportunity of reading any such aphorisms, I should certainly not have given you the charge of your daughter. And yet you want me to ask again that you may have her! Upon my word! If you want me to do that, you must not talk like that again, I beg, otherwise, I shall think that she is better where she is.

Good-night, my daughter! Read this letter three times over, rather than once. The first time it will anger you, but the third time you will agree with me and you will wake up as if from a bad dream.

I embrace you nevertheless, and tenderly,

Your Mother.

TO PRINCE JEROME

Nohant, February, 1853.

Thank you, dear Prince, I was waiting until the name Patureau appeared in the *Moniteur* before sending you my petitions for the pardons. I am still uncertain whether he had anything to do with the matter because one cannot easily obtain the *Moniteur* down here. But I received the confirmation of your good news from M. Charles Abbatucci, and I sent on his letter to act as a passport to my fugitive. I am expecting him and probably he will express his gratitude to you himself, in the language of the peasant and the good fellow he is.

I am going up to Paris at the end of the month. If, as I feel certain, dear Imperial Highness, temporal splendours have not changed you, come and greet me in my den, the den of a classical poet, for I must feel affection for you and belief in you, however great a prince you may be.

GEORGE SAND.

TO MAZZINI

(Then in London)

Nohant, 15 *Dec.*, 1853.

I have never ceased to cherish and respect you my friend. That is all that I can say. The certainty that all my letters are opened and commented upon, must necessarily restrict many expressions of affection or family confidences.

You say that I am resigned. It is quite possible. I have great reason to be so, reasons as deep in my eyes, as religious and philosophical as those which you think forbid you to feel resignation. Why should

you suppose that it means cowardice or exhaustion? You have written to me rather unkindly on that subject. I did not wish to answer. Serious affections are always full of a great respect which might be compared to filial piety. One sometimes comes across unjust parents, and one keeps silence rather than contradict them. One waits until their eyes shall be opened.

As for the allusions that you regret not having seen in certain works of mine, you cannot know much of what is going on in France if you think that they would be possible. And then perhaps you have not sufficiently considered that when there is a shortage of liberty, frank and courageous souls prefer silence to insinuation. Besides, were liberty to be re-established for us, it is by no means certain that I want to touch yet upon questions which humanity is not yet worthy of solving, which would have divided up the greatest and best minds of the day, into different camps of hatred.

You say you are astonished that I am able to go on producing literature, but I thank God for preserving my faculty for it, because a conscience which is pure and honest like mine, finds a moral purpose to pursue, outside all party questions. What should I do with myself if I abandoned my humble task? Join conspiracies? That is not my vocation; I have no talent for it at all. Write pamphlets? I have neither the malice nor the type of mind for that. Theories? There have been too many theories and thus we have become divided, which means the burial of all truth and all power. I am and always have been an artist before all else; I know that all men who are politicians only, have a great contempt for artists because they judge them by certain idiotic types who are a dishonour to the name of art. But you, my friend, must know that the true artist is as useful as the *priest* or *warrior*, and that when the artist respects the *true* and

the *good*, he is on a road which God will bless without ceasing. Art is of all nationalities and of all periods; its particular quality is precisely that of *being able to survive* when all else must perish: It is for that reason that art is preserved from mixing in passions which are either too personal or too general, and has been given an organism of *patience* and *persistence* unknown elsewhere; also durable sensibility and a contemplative outlook which shelters an invincible faith. Now why and how should you think that calmness of the will constitutes any kind of satisfaction of egoism? To such a reproach I should have nothing to answer I admit, or at least, only this: that I did not deserve the accusation. My heart is as transparent as my life, and I do not discover any venomous fungi growing therein, which I ought to try and extirpate. If it were the case, I should put up a stout fight, I can promise you, before I would allow myself to be invaded by Evil.

Adieu, my friend, Never think me *changed* towards you or anything else.

GEORGE.

TO PRINCE JEROME.

Nohant, 16 *July*, 1854.

MY DEAR PRINCE,

You told me to write to you but I do not like to, very often as you must have so little time for reading letters. This is only a line to let you know that my affection for you is unchanged and that I think of you more than you can have time to think of me. It is quite natural; you are in action, and we are spectators. You are in the full tide of life and we are waiting in retirement. Some one has written to me from Belle-Isle (you can guess who it is); "I am accused of Chauvinism because I hope that our young soldiers

will enter Moscow and Petersburg and put up prayers for the success of the mission which always falls to our dear country's lot in this world."

There enchained is the soul of a hero, who prays artlessly just as I do, a man whom I am proud to be in agreement with.

But we are very unhappy at getting no news except through the papers, which are not reliable and because we have to wait so often and so long for news which turns out to be quite contradictory. Whatever may happen I cannot give up hoping. I cannot persuade myself that the Russians will ever beat us. Nor can you, I am sure.

My son says every day that if I were not such a *stupid* mother he would volunteer to go with you. But he is my only son and what should I do without him? You know that we have had a terrible summer and that if the rains do not stop soon we shall have famine. Ah, we are dancing on a very tight rope.

You and your soldiers are holding the other end of it. As for the issue that you desire, the revival of Poland and all the victims thereof who do not seem to be taken into account, perhaps it is written in Destiny. God alone is great and Mahomet is His prophet.

But this is running into more than two lives. Pardon and adieu dear Imperial Highness, always a fellow-citizen of us all, and more than ever so, now that you are a soldier of France. In that capacity you receive all the respect which is your due, without prejudice to all the affection which I reserve for your own *self*.

GEORGE SAND.

TO CHARLES PONCY

Nohant, 16 *July*, 1854.

Do not be worried about me, my dear boy. I am fairly well, I am working and receive a great many friends. At this season the house is always full. With a cheerful exterior I try to throw off heavy sorrows which come from a quarter you know of. And I have lost my grand-daughter, the source of all my joy.[1] And yet! What if it should be better for her! But the mountains of sorrow which darken my horizon in that quarter are too high and too dismal to show you.[2] I have not the courage either, and the more conscious I become that I can do nothing, the more I suffer and the more needful it seems to me to keep my thoughts to myself.

Those around me are happy and really that is all I ask in order to reconcile myself with life. And then I have work, and that is all one can ask of men as a link with their cursed and ill-fated social system.

I have received nothing from you, my boy. If you have posted anything, it must have gone astray. That often happens in the transit from Toulon to Nohant. Always send off a letter when you can, and never mind about the postage. I have paid postage for so many stupid letters that I did not want, that I am compensated when I pay for a letter which pleases and interests me. Oh yes! Do go away into the country if there is a danger of cholera. Even if you should not get it, from the first moment you feel afraid of it, your life will be nothing but the strain of trying to brave it. Send me news of yourself often, however lazy I may be in writing to you. If you were not so far off and the journey so expensive I would ask you to come to

[1] Jeanne Clésinger, only child of Solange, who died at the age of six.

[2] Solange's marriage with Clésinger had proved a terribly unhappy one. They were now separated.

Nohant. Besides these difficulties we are having weather which would make you despair altogether, for it makes us rather despairing and we are not nearly so exacting in matters of weather. For two whole months we have not had two days of sunshine and the ground is so water-logged that we can never go off the roads. It is a great nuisance to Maurice who has a perfect rage for entomology; and we are really threatened with famine if it goes on. Up to now the harvest-fields have not been absolutely ruined but it is time indeed for a change: The corn is beginning to droop and if once it is flattened into the mud one final down-pour would complete the ruin.

The revenue derived from Nohant amounts to so little, that the loss of our own corn would not be an irreparable disaster; but if the disaster is general, as all things are inter-dependent, art would be as unfruitful as the soil, and I do not know how we should manage to feed the starving peasants round us. Heaven certainly must be incensed and the sun does not want to have anything more to do with us, in this corner of the universe.

You sent me some verses by a friend of yours, but I cannot, like you, be indulgent to them. He also sent me some on his own account, and I did not answer. What could I do? I really do not know how to lie! I think the stuff is terribly "mannered," with the affectation of false simplicity, and so loose and badly thrown together that it is almost incomprehensible. Why do you send me stuff like that? I can do nothing with it. At the same time I should be sorry to grieve a friend of yours and as I am not obliged to reduce him to despair by my candour I prefer to keep silence. You must make the best of it and tell him that I am too busy . . . that I get too many manuscripts, prose, verse and what not. . . . It is the truth. Manuscripts arrive every day in *avalanches*, from all corners of the world; and

hardly any of them are readable either by my poor eyes or my intellectual faculties. As a last straw, your friend writes as for some one short-sighted, and I am long-sighted!

But I hope you are writing verse yourself. I cannot like everybody's, and it is partly because yours has spoilt me for other people's!

Good-night, dear boy. Kiss Désirée and Solange for me, as I kiss you with all my motherly heart.

TO EDWARD CHARTON

(a friend in Paris)

DEAR FRIEND,

You were not well when I saw you last. Are you better? Do tell me about yourself. I have been wanting to write to you for a long time. I meant to send you a dissertation upon that fine book which we had been discussing, as I have now read it.[1] But what sorrows have fallen upon me suddenly! In the first place I lost two of my friends and though I hardly like to say so, that was nothing, for I have suddenly lost the little grand-daughter whom I adored, my Jeanne, of whom I had spoken to you, whose absence as you know, was so cruel to me. I was going to get her back. The tribunal had given me the custody of her. Her father made a show of resistance to satisfy his *amour-propre*. But for Monsieur B., whose stealthy instinctive hatred (not justified by any facts that I know of) but tenacious and long-standing, made him work against me, the father himself would have brought me the child. He wanted to. He always wanted to. But the lawyers wanted to prevent me having her. Clésinger therefore appealed to a tribunal but it was not a Summary Court. In vain I wrote to

[1] *Terre et Ciel,* by Jean Reynaud.

that hard, cold lawyer, that I knew my little girl was badly looked after, was sad and really terribly upset at being sent to the school where her father had placed her. And while these negotiations were going on, her father took her out one day in the middle of January without noticing that she had a summer dress on. That evening he brought her back to school quite ill and went away on a shooting-expedition, no one knew where. It turned out that she had scarlatina. She got through it very well and the school-doctor said she might leave the sick room. Of course she ought really to have had six weeks at least of great care, in an even temperature. But that was not considered. They sent for her mother and let her nurse the child when they saw the case was hopeless. She died in her mother's arms, smiling and talking, suffocated by general dropsy, not suspecting for a moment that she was very ill, but seized with a strange divination and saying in the calmest way : " No, no, my dear little Maman, I shall not be coming to Nohant I shall never get away from here ! "

My poor daughter brought her to me. She, Solange, is still at Nohant. She has strength and good health, thank God. As for myself at least I have courage, I ought to have it anyway, but now that everything has calmed down and all arrangements are made, and life resumes its normal course with that child removed from me . . . I cannot tell you what is going on within me, and I think it would be better not to. What I wanted to tell you is that the book did me good, that and Leibritz. I knew it all, I could not have expressed it, I could not have established it but I was certain of it and I am certain of it. I see the future eternal life before me like a certainty, like a dazzle of light in which it is impossible to see things clearly, but the Light is a certainty, and that is all I need. I know that my Jeanne is dead, I know that she is better off than she would be in this sad

world, where she has been the victim already of wicked and insensate beings. I feel sure that I shall meet her again and that she will recognise me, even if she did not remember her former existence or I either. She was part of myself, and that can never be changed. But these wonderful books which stimulate our thirst to be gone from here have their dangerous side. One can imagine oneself flying away on the wings that they lend, and we *must* learn how to endure the full sojourn that we are destined to spend here. I am quite willing; my duty here is so clearly marked out that revolt is impossible, but I feel my soul straining to be gone in spite of myself. Yet it is not detached from my other children, nor from my friends. It is anxious to perform its whole task and to give happiness to others a little while longer. But the more my soul becomes conscious of what lies beyond this life, the more eagerly it strives to separate from the will, which proves inadequate. I say the *soul* for want of a better expression for that something within which is yearning to get away, for the will ought not to be something outside the soul; but yet the will cannot hold back the soul when the *hour comes*.

Do not refer to all this, my friend. If my children who often read my letters by chance were to know that I was so much upset it would worry them too much. I am going to do my utmost to live with them as long as possible. I am going to spend next month on the French Riviera to try and cure a little asthma I have been suffering from which is not serious however.

I shall spend four or five days in Paris at the beginning of March to get my passport. I do not want to see anyone, except that I should like to see you and to give you a message to the author of *Terre et Ciel*, to ask you to tell him all that I have not written here, of my too personal anguish over this very question of life and death. It is one of the finest books which has emerged from the human mind.

It threw me into a state of the most extraordinary joy. I should like to write a volume on it to express my praise as I feel it. I shall do so later on if I can ever begin to write again, but quite between ourselves I will tell you that I am not at all sure that that side of my life will ever return to me. I no longer live by myself or in myself. For the last two years my life was wrapped up within that little girl. So much has gone from me with her, that I hardly know what remains to me and I have not yet found the courage to examine myself. I do nothing but linger among her dolls and books, and beside the little garden that we made together; with her little wheel-barrow and tiny watering-pot; her little bonnet, her sewing, her gloves and everything that I keep round me still, as if awaiting her return. I gaze at these things and touch them in bewilderment asking myself if I am in my right senses and when I shall finally understand that she will never come back and that it was she whom I have just seen buried.

You see I always come back to my torn heart and soul. That is why I can hardly write to anyone at present. There are so few of my friends whom I should not weary, or sadden too much. I can speak out to you, because like me you live half in another world and for the moment I am able to hope again with the salutary placidity that I used to possess when I was not so tired of waiting for release. But you have a suffering body. Do let me hear that you are better before I leave Nohant. You have one great resource and that is your faculty for living by habit in the world of ideas, where I see things too much from the point of view of the poet, that is to say, I use my emotions more than my reasoning powers. In that world you can exist with a sustained lucidity it seems to me. One should always be able to do that without being too much occupied with the inevitable cares of material existence, with the duties which sometimes

exceed our strength, and with the rending griefs which nothing can appease. The inordinate love of mothers is certainly a law of Providence, but Providence is very hard to men and above all to women. Good-bye dear friend. I am yours heart and soul.

G. Sand.

TO HER NIECE AUGUSTINE

Nohant, 14 *February*, 1855.

My little Darling,

If I do not write you know that it is really not my fault. I am too ill, suffocating with asthma. I have pains all over me and I cannot work and I cannot take comfort.

I had enough courage at first to bear up well and now I am paying for that in detail by extreme prostration.

I do not want to give way to it however. Maurice wants me to go and spend the month of March at Nice or Genoa and I promised to do it.

I am much concerned about Bertholdi's bad colds which make you so uneasy.[1] But one may have a cough for a long time without it meaning anything serious. However, I know by experience how fatiguing it is and how much it gets on people's nerves, one's own as well as other peoples'. You certainly ought to try and escape from the cold climate of Lunéville just as I am going to try and escape the too cruel and bitter associations of home, which is filled with the presence of that child. But what can I do? The usual difficulty is as rampant as ever. I shall have to come back almost at once to work, and if Bertholdi goes away it will be the same with him. A few days rest will be no use to him. What he wants is a more comfortable life as a whole. And how is anyone to give it to him?

[1] Bertholdi was Augustine's husband.

You never told me whether little George stood the journey well and whether he has got back the fresh colour which he had rather lost during his stay here. Take great care of him and don't leave him except with well-trained nurses. Solange is in Paris, feeling better and more satisfied about her own affairs. Her father had some dealings with her, but her husband none. She thought she might have been useful to you and but for our great sorrow I am sure she would have done what she could. She will think of it again I am sure when she can go out and show herself among people again. Embrace all your dear family for me: George, Charles, Marie to whom I have not the strength to write. I do not write to anyone. I cannot. Every time I begin to write about myself I am seized with a sort of fever which lasts the whole day. It is really a sort of illness which will no doubt pass in time. Do not be anxious. I have done and always will do my utmost. I embrace you with all my heart. Ah! my poor child, how I should like to be able to give you as much happiness as I have sorrow.

TO MADEMOISELLE LEROYER DE CHANTEPIE

(Her unknown correspondent who lived at Angers)

Nohant, 27 February, 1855.

MADEMOISELLE,

Since you are good enough to count on my sympathy I advise you, I even beg you to come away from those surroundings where you suffer so much and to go and live in Paris; there you will find the noble occupations of the mind, which are absolutely needed by a soul like yours; music, art and friendships which your lofty intelligence and your generous heart would make in no time.

If you feel you really must continue to be a Catholic you will certainly find some director there who will be

enlightened enough to cure you of this malady of conscientious scruples which I know all about and from which I suffered in my youth cruelly enough to understand your difficulties and sympathise with them. No indeed! A soul like yours must never be allowed to succumb to baseless terrors. You must be rescued from them by means of a vigorous and healthy course of reading. I am too ignorant to tell you what you should read, but write to Monsieur Jean Reynaud, enclosing my letter if you like. In that way, he will see that I know all about you and that your need of intellectual succour is not a mere frivolous craving.

Yes, without ever having seen you I feel that I know you well. Will it not soon be ten years since you began writing me these long letters in which from the welter of contradictions and confused ideas, I have been made quite certain that your goodness is whole-hearted, it is spontaneous and naïve and your judgment is so generous and upright in all essentials. Ask him to tell you the names of some books which will save you from this condition of soul, and better still, come away from that solitude, where you are simply consuming yourself, where all your surroundings leave you and make you more than ever solitary. I do not know M. Jean Reynaud well enough to write to him about you, as he does not know you personally. But you can make yourself known to him; his book did me a great deal of good, when I had a terrible need of finding in a mind of the first order, versed in the highest learning the reasoned confirmation of all that I feel by instinct, for my courage has been put to severe tests lately.

I have lost my adorable and adored little granddaughter, my poor daughter's child. I have been quite ill which is the reason why I have not been able to answer your letters, and I am still so broken-down that my son, my dear son, is going to take me away for a change. I am starting in two days' time.

I shall be home at Nohant in two months and shall then hope to have better news of you. Before returning here I shall probably spend a few days in Paris. If you have been able to realise your tempting dream of going to live there, let me know in Paris in the first week in May. Forgive me for this scanty letter. I am still so broken, but I *believe*. I am sure of meeting my little girl again in a better world; and you also, with your pure heart, must feel sure of the future. To doubt the goodness of God is a weakness of human nature. Believe in His goodness with all the force of your nature, and you will find the reflection of it in yourself. Do not be afraid of death. It is a dear refuge I am sure; and when once one has understood that, real courage consists in not desiring it too much.

Yours with all my heart as always, dear soul in pain.

GEORGE SAND.

TO JULES NERAUD

(One of her neighbours in the country)

Frascati, 14 *April*, 1855.

DEAR FRIEND,

We have been a fortnight at Frascati and want to stay another week. Maurice, after being unwell when we first arrived here, is going on so well now that he thinks of nothing but eating, sleeping and rushing about. I am following that *régime* on my own account and I feel pretty well physically speaking. But my brain seems to have got atrophy. I will leave you to imagine whether life is interesting when one just gets up in the morning to walk five or six miles every day to come in famishing, and then at night tumble asleep after a very bad dinner of cook-shop standard, which seems good to one's tremendous appetite. And yet

without perceiving it I am amassing a host of memories which will interest me later on, when I have the leisure to meditate on all that is going on round me at present.

It is a lovely country that we are exploring and well worth careful study, in order to anchor oneself to the opinions of it that one will perforce carry elsewhere. It is a charming landscape, above all one would call it pretty, I think, for do not believe a word of anything you may hear of the grandeur and sublimity of the landscape round Rome. For anyone who has travelled a good deal it is on the small scale, but ravishingly attractive. You must understand that it is the little in the great, for this Roman Campagna, which is uniform in character is like an immense sea surrounded by mountains. But the details, the ruins, the palaces, the churches, the hills, the lakes, the gardens, all seem out of proportion with the background which continues them.

For people like ourselves it is a real holiday to explore this solitude all day long, and to discover the points of the country ourselves. Guides only weary us, and do not know the roads. We are doing without them. So now you have an idea of our life here, you who know how much we can find in a walk at Crevant or in Boulaize Wood. We are now engaged in collecting plants and butterflies among the ruins of Tusculum, round the lake of Regillus and Heaven knows where! The names are more pompous than the places, but the places are charming, that much is certain anyway.

We have had atrocious weather for Italy. A great deal of rain which makes the *houses* very cold, for outside although we are deprived of sunshine, the temperature is always mild and it is only one's rooms which are uninhabitable at present. They are immense rooms, vaulted with stucco ceilings and painted with frescoes, designed in every way for hot weather. Neither windows nor doors will shut properly and what fireplace there is, seems incapable of

keeping a fire alight. We have had some beautiful sunshine for the last three days only, from morning till night; but we have been through every sort of weather.

Easter Day was also fine and very hot. We spent it in Rome where we received Benediction *urbi et orbi*. This ceremony has been much lauded, but it is not staged really artistically. French taste is lacking in everything here as elsewhere. Nature laughs it to scorn here. She lavishes flowers wild here, that we cultivate respectfully in our gardens. Here, in the midst of the desert, you may walk upon mignonette, narcissi, cyclamens and a thousand other adorable flowers, of which I will spare you the names as tulip is the only flower you know.

And then I do not want to tell you in advance all that we shall chatter to the limits of satiety, at Nohant; for everything from A to Z is different here: men, beasts, customs, ideas, needs, the soil, plant-life, air it is another world from ours. I do not feel the bewitching quality of this country nearly so much as people said I should. Too many things are at variance with our ways of seeing and thinking; but of course I realise that it is a good thing to have seen it, even only to make one love dear France under her grey sky the better for it, where men or human beings, faulty as they may be, are more human than anywhere else.

Upon that I will wish you good-night, my old friend. I am dropping with sleep. I received your letter of April 4th this evening. You are astonished at the time the post takes! I, on the contrary, am astonished that it did not take longer now that I see how all the affairs of life are organised in this country.

Yours with all my heart.

GEORGE SAND.

TO MONSIEUR . . .

(who had sent her one of his manuscripts to read)

Nohant, 23rd July, 1855.

MONSIEUR,

It has not been possible for me to acknowledge your letter earlier. After having read it I put down the manuscript unread. I am not by way of giving advice, it is not my vocation I am sure, and I have sworn that I never would judge any unpublished work, never having been able to tell a poet the truth without angering him, when I am unable to feed his hopes. Monsieur, I do not doubt either your modesty or your sincerity when writing this to you. But I know that, if I felt that you had no literary future, I should find it impossible to deceive you. In that case I should be a cause of affliction to you and that would be a sad office for you to impose upon me. Therefore, I prefer not to know what to think, and so I resolutely close all the manuscripts which are sent to me all the more willingly because such a great number arrive here that with the best will in the world I could never have time to go through them.

Do not be discouraged by my refusal, Monsieur. If your verses are good you have no need of anyone outside your own circle of friends to tell you so and they will tell you so with the utmost warmth. If on the contrary, you find that they condemn the verses, remember that it is perhaps their part to enlighten you and that it is one of the most delicate and most painful tasks of friendship.

Believe me yours faithfully, Monsieur,

GEORGE SAND.

The sealed packet is in my bureau addressed to you. If you want it sent back please write a line to M. Marceau at Nohant and to simplify the search which he is kind enough to undertake in my absence, please ask him for manuscript 104.

TO PAULIN LIMAYRAC

(A Paris publisher, M. Philippe Collier, had commissioned George Sand to write him a series bearing the general title, *Famous Lovers*. In order to lighten the author's task, as at this period of her life she lived at Nohant nearly all the year round, M. Collier had arranged with Limayrac to make all the researches and take all the notes that George Sand would require. But Paulin Limayrac having soon thrown up the work which was really too much for him, the agreement was broken by consent of all parties. *Evénor et Luecippe* (first title of the series *Les Amours de l'age d'or*) was the only work written by George Sand in this series and had to be given to the publisher as compensation)

If my collaborator will look at the question from my point of view it will be easy for him to extract the marrow of all the facts that he wants to present to me. There are dozens of ways of receiving an impression. I only have one because in spite of myself my mind is more absolute than my character. Is that an inconvenience in a matter of this description? I do not think so. Once I make my very simple and artless but unvarying principles known, our work together must be rendered clear to us both, and can be upheld without too much inadequacy at one end or the other.

Starting from that sort of standpoint, we have to seek first in each famous love-story for the social, intellectual, moral and physical environment of our couple. Then you must examine the personal character of each individual, then the nature and circumstances of their love, then the facts, the end which was either attained or missed, the result which was good or bad; for we will not bother much over that, and will perhaps tell the story of love which led to evil results as that will be of some use to support our theory through the criticisms that it will be necessary to make upon it. You will have to rummage

through libraries, in the books of every writer on the subject, in the letters of Mademoiselle Volland and Madame Duchatelet, as well as in the sonnets of Petrarch, and you must only take hold of the salient points which will throw light on the application of my theory.

Example: Did Voltaire and Madame Duchatelet love each other with heart, senses or mind? I think myself that it was a purely intellectual affair. That is why their love was incomplete. But it was something to be able to love each other on such a high plane and the marriage of two great minds is a subject worth taking trouble about, worth analysis, worth arriving at some opinion on the results.

Then again. In what manner did Agnes Sorel love her royal lover? Did she begin like Joan of Arc with a passionate patriotism? Or was her heart, were her senses (both or one or the other) so possessed by the king, that enthusiasm blazed up in the woman's soul like a revelation? In that case all honour be to Love! I do not know the story of Agnes very well; in fact I know no history at all, I have the memory of a linnet, but if you know the story, or if, having forgotten it, you can revive it for me, you must be able to tell me either: "It was love which revealed partiotism to Agnes!" or "It was patriotism which inspired Agnes with love!"

However I recall four pretty lines of verse belonging to the traditions of this district of Berri, written upon *La Saurette*, which was the people's nickname for Agnes. It is derived from the word *sauret*, which in the dialect of Berri means *sans oreilles* (without ears).

They still say hereabouts *un chien sauret* (a dog with its ears cropped). Here is the verse:

> Gentille Agnes plus de los tu mérites,
> La cause étant de France recouvrer,
> Que ce que peut dedans un cloître ouvrer
> Close nonani ou bien dévot ermite.

But that is a digression. Let us get back to our history.

Mary Stuart! A fascinating but perverse woman on whom we shall be obliged to moralise. And what a lot of lovely and curious stories there are in antiquity to be weeded out and set in order, or brought into prominence!

I do not quite see yet what your part in the work will be. I have undertaken upon my word of honour to edit the whole thing. You see that my publishers are intensely trying, but who has not had that experience with publishers? However, if I have to trace our millions of tracks left by flies' legs I think you will be fairly busy too! I have not many books down here and no means of procuring them in the country. I cannot go and live in Paris at present and therefore you will have to read for me and paint me a picture of each biography and give me extracts from letters, letters, or poems to quote. Please do not take any particular care over your own conclusions and extracts. So long as it is legible I shall be able to make something of it. If it should be necessary for me to read a whole book (that might easily happen because the spirit of the passions is sometimes disseminated and you have to fish for it in a lake with a line) you must take that particular book out of the Public Library and send it to me. That is if it be a French book, for I cannot claim a real knowledge of any other language. If you could avoid sending the whole book by extracting several pages you must hire a copyist at my expense.

The historical plan of the work will be your business. I am absolutely incapable of doing it at first sight, especially as my eyes are now so bad for reading. You being young and sound all over, must undertake the recapitulation in chronological order of each love-story and must choose out everything which is worth quoting.

We will make short work of those characters of whom we can only discover very little in the obscurity of past ages, reserving ourselves to write lengthily in proportion as we advance into the light of the present day, which is certainly the most interesting. You will be able to sketch out this plan at your leisure, as we need not begin the work for at least six months. I must finish my *Reminiscences*.

In certain biographies we shall come upon characters who can be brought in as having acted as intermediaries and that will permit us to allude to certain love-tales which are more notorious than desirable to discuss, by giving them a position in the background.

You see that you will have to establish a link with me and make me understand how you are going to work. You must keep a careful record of the number of hours that you work, the expeditions you are obliged to make, the expenses and fatigue which come upon you in the course of the work, for though amusing (at least I think so) this work will probably not be so light, as the publishers make out, and I will keep your interests to the fore since you are kind enough to have confidence in me.

TO ALEXANDRE DUMAS FILS

Nohant, 26 November, 1855.

My dear Boy,

I am so pleased to have some news of you. I ask nothing better than to carry out your wishes, and I have destined one of the parts for Mademoiselle Dubois, whom you recommended to my attention last year. I do not know M. Bache. I have never met him. If you did not simply recommend him out of kindness and are really interested in him you must answer these questions: is he tall or short, stout,

young, old, frivolous or serious? Could he take the part of a nobleman of ambiguous character, or would he do a rogue or a valet better? Does he expect a big part or would he accept a small one? Finally, has he originality? Is there good stuff in him? You congratulate me on *Favilla*; and I have not seen you since the success of the *Demi-Monde*.[1] You were not in Paris, I think, when I went to see the piece. It is a masterpiece of cleverness, wit and observation. It is really a scientific progress from the stage to life and yet I enjoyed *Diane* and *Marguérite* more because I like plays which make me cry. I like drama better than comedy and like a true woman I want to be able to fall in love with one of the characters. I regretted that the young girl's part in the *Demi-Monde* was left so undeveloped and that the she-villain absorbed all the interest, though she was true to life and so well played. Of course I knew that after having made *La Dame aux Camélias* a sympathetic character, you were bound to give us the other side of the medal. Art demands these impartial studies, and the contrasts that we come across in life. And I am not attempting criticism. I always place you at the head of our dramatists in the modern manner, just as your father is the first of playwrights in a style that has gone by. My style seems to belong equally to the day before yesterday and the day after to-morrow, it hardly matters which you call it. My work is a great pleasure to me, but I am even better pleased with what you produce, and your plays are events of the heart and mind to me. Will you make me cry next time please? If you find yourself in that vein will you not find that I shall deprive myself of the pleasure. Why do I never see you when I go to Paris? It is because there is never time to let you know that I am there, and I never have time to find out whether you are there. You ought to come and see me at Nohant. You

[1] Dumas' play.

would have time to work and we should also have hours of recreation when we could talk. So do come one of these days if you like me a little, when I like you so much. I send you kind messages from Maurice, too, and I beg you will give my love to your father. Why does one never see him? It is just what one needs. Heroic drama is no more, because the Masters have deserted it. If you should answer this and if you have fresh news from Montiguy, please hand it on. And have we slain that poor Villars by not giving him any principal parts? But is it really our fault?

GEORGE SAND.

TO PAUL SAINT-VICTOR

(One of the critics in Paris)

I have just been thanking Theophile Gautier for his good notice[1] and I want to thank you for yours too dear Monsieur. I am overcoming a scruple of conscience which has always withheld me from thanking a critic. But as you will understand the origin of this scruple you will understand equally well why it would disappear in your case.

There is a foolish pride of which one is accused by those who have no other; there is true pride in which lofty characters are never mistaken. That is why I tell you with confidence that I feel encouraged by your sympathy and that I am very grateful for it.

If the dress rehearsal of *Comme il vous plaira* has any interest for you I should be grateful if you would attend that too.

Yours sincerely,

GEORGE SAND.

[1] Of Françoise.

TO CHARLES PONCY

Nohant, 23 July, 1856.

DEAR BOY,

I am at Nohant and in good health and so are all the others except my daughter who is not very well. She has been very ill in Paris and has come here to get over it. I hope she will soon be quite recovered, but if she is not really strong by the autumn I shall take her away. Where? I do not dare to promise once again that it will be in your direction, although my thoughts always carry me there, but I have failed you in that respect so often, or rather, I have failed my own hopes so often that I can no longer decide on the destination of my journey. The plans I made for last winter resolved themselves into a few days in the Forest of Fontainebleau; one of the most beautiful places in the world, it is true, but so near Paris that we do not even call it an expedition. Yet I am always aspiring towards *going away*. Absence for me represents a little corner of the world where I shall be at rest from all business and all care and all annoying acquaintances and all domestic clatter and all responsibility for my own existence. That is what I did discover for three weeks at Frascati the year before last and also at Spezzia for a week. That is what I ask God to give me once more, just for six months somewhere under a smiling sky, in picturesque country; a very modest dream, but it has flown past me ten years, running at full speed and never allowing itself to be caught.

However you must not arrive here without announcing yourself, for if days of freedom should present themselves I shall seize them by the hair, and it would be very annoying for us to cross each other *en route*. Always let me know some time before if you are coming. I am so pleased to think of you so usefully employed and in possession of such a lovely sprig of a

daughter as your Solangette. I am longing to be able to see her and kiss her and her mother too.

I am looking out for all the works that you announce and I congratulate you on the stout courage which has upheld you. Here we all fall back on our work for support too, even my poor worn-out wreck of a Solange, who has taken it into her head to begin writing verses and will perhaps succeed in producing something good.

I send you a heap of friendly greetings from her and from all the rest and I add my tender and motherly benedictions.

TO THE EMPRESS EUGÉNIE

Nohant, 6 *October*, 1857.

MADAME,

The gracious and helpful patronage which your Majesty extends to artists gives me confidence in addressing you, as an artist myself, to appeal to your bounteous generosity on behalf of a family which would be worthy to benefit by it.

Marie Dorval's great name as a dramatic artist is sufficient guarantee for that family and is in itself a petition! M. Lugnet who married this famous actress's daughter is himself an artist of talent and a good man. His Majesty, the Emperor, was good enough to give his performances some recognition recently at Plombières. M. Lugnet has five children and no source of income but his own daily earnings.

But the fact that I count upon to touch the kind heart of your Majesty is the realisation of the innumerable charities performed by Marie Dorval during her life-time, though she died poor, after a life of struggle which won her fame.

Besides gifts of a hundred thousand francs to monastic infirmaries as the results of her great successes

on the Stage, Madame Dorval (who was a *Dame de Charité* of Toulouse) founded several beds in the Hospitals of Lyon, Bordeaux, Montpellier, and in one of the Crêches of the Faubourg Saint-Antoine. There are several little beds there dedicated to Saint George in memory of an adored little grand-son whom this poor woman was not able to survive very long.

If your Majesty would deign to say one word Madame Dorval's second grandson Jacques Lunget would become the recipient of education in a *Lycée* which would develop his fine intelligence and happy character. It would be one kind deed the more in the precious life of your Majesty and I venture to say that it would be one of the benefits bestowed by you, which would evoke the deepest gratitude and bring forth the finest fruits. It is to a mother that other mothers venture to address themselves. The title of mother is a sacred one and Heaven has blessed it for your Majesty; and it adds hope and faith to the profound respect with which your subjects appeal to you, and with this profound respect I have the honour to be the very humble and obedient servant of your Majesty.

GEORGE SAND.

TO THE EMPRESS EUGÉNIE

Nohant, 30 October, 1857.

MADAME,

The response which your Majesty has deigned to make to an appeal worthy of your interest is exactly what we expected of your exquisite kindness of heart. We have now only to tell you that the great artist who has left this world for a better one must surely be now praying for your happiness as a mother, for the happiness of the sweet and illustrious benefactress of her children.

We do not venture to offer thanks to your Majesty, for we know that you have done good because you love to do good without asking whether you would receive a full measure of gratitude in return; but we do not venture to tell your Majesty that you have made still more of your subjects happy because we know that is the only reward you care to receive.

It is with these respectful and profound feelings in the name of the family of Lugnet that I have the honour to be your Majesty's very humble and very grateful servant.

GEORGE SAND.

TO PRINCE JEROME

Nohant, 17 *December*, 1857.

Yes, monseigneur, you are right, and as always you see the matter from a lofty point of view. It is not so much a question of succeeding, as of doing what ought to be done. One is never mortified at failure when one has only been thinking of risking oneself for others. As ever, you have been *kind* and when we are that, *God will do the rest.*

The reason of your sadness, my dear prince, is simply repressed genius. Without seeking where the fault may lie nor what the issue may be I cannot help wondering what a young being in the prime of life can do with himself when scope for a real use of his forces has been withheld from him by circumstances. I have told myself that your scientific studies and above all your reading of scientific philosophy in which you are interested and in which you are a past master without ever allowing it to appear, may advance you far upon the road of progress. Those members of your family, who have dedicated themselves to science will not be the least useful members of it, nor the least

illustrious in the judgment of the future. Perhaps too they have been by no means the most unhappy. Viewing your case I envy you three great riches : your abilities, leisure, and youth, not to mention the possession of the money necessary for all research and exploration, the material means which are so often lacking to generous minds. I know that you work very hard, and that you never cease to study, but why do you not attach your name to some work which could be carried out under your own eye, of which you would be the life and soul, because you would be the instigator of the research and would hold the *matrix* —thought of the philosophical aspect of the *thing* in question. I am not speaking of special systems of research that means putting oneself at the mercy of criticism ; in your position you could not do it ; but in all the sciences there are well established points of view which have been thoroughly verified, which every intelligent eye and powerful hand can advance and enlarge to the great benefit of the sum of human knowledge. What is commonly called *work* is to my mind of such over-weening interest that it drowns all cares of every day life.

For you who are fortunate enough not to be frivolous and futile the question really is to find enough air to fill the capacity of your lungs and, defying fortune and men, to place yourself in a sphere which will develop your intellect without stifling it. For the complete development of every human life I consider that three points are essential : one should be able to love someone and something about equally and to love oneself to a reasonable pitch at the same time. I have noticed and experienced the fact that when this equilibrium is disturbed, one either loves oneself too much or too little. By reason of your position in life it is the *something* to love that you lack, you lack the sensation of a passion appeased, which is given by the satisfaction of an intellectual aim, and what is that

intellectual aim but humanity, because it is for humanity that one labours.

I have so much respect and enthusiasm for natural science of which I know not even the first word, but which gives me a beating heart and frenzies of joy when by chance I can make my own some notions of it which are within my reach, that I cannot speak of this branch of learning to you as a *pis-aller* for the employment of your mental activities.

Perhaps one day events which no one can foresee will trace out another path for you. And perhaps also if these events come upon you when you are far advanced on the road of learning they will cause you nothing but regret and vexation, for our appreciation of life changes with the situations which it presents and many things happen which we thought we desired which we wish we could avoid later in life because we are then better judges, and know better what they really mean. If I permit myself to write all this to you it is because on reading your *Travels in the Arctic* I began to think about you even more vividly than about the Arctic, though my imagination caught fire over that too.

I saw you, intrepid and inflexibly determined amid the dangers and sufferings of this exploration and I said to myself: "What the devil has he really got to do with this Isle of Jean Magen which he is determined to conquer on that stupid and imperturable ice-barrier?" Edmond has related the adventure in a very charming way. One feels one is there with you, and through his lively style and the impeccable taste of his discretion one feels you there and feels you battling against the material obstacles with great courage and a great deal of *furia francese*.

But once again, what has all that really got to do with you? You know very well, monseigneur, that the eternal winter of the Arctic regions is not really the sphere of princes, and that the Arctic will make no

arrangement with its floating fortresses to throw open a royal road for them. At the moment you must have been passionately attached to the end in view, not to the Isle of Jean-Magen, which does not seem to have been an earthly Paradise, but to the scientific fact that you were bent on capturing. Now if you have such aptitudes and *such a will*, why is it that they only get developed in exceptional circumstances, such as a long journey or a great danger? I am not abusing either travel or danger, both bring poetry into life, but why is so much exploration in the world of science (which could be done at one's own fire-side) not regulated by you in a way which would give you at any time, the keen emotion of discovery and the serious joy of conquest while at the same time you might be of use to the rest of the world?

These are a few ideas of your humble friend in her desert, Imperial Highness, which she submits to you because she would see you appreciated by everyone as highly as she is able to appreciate you, and above all she is desirous that you should find in yourself the force and the satisfaction that others find in some kind of gamble, playing pitch and toss for their souls.

Thank you for your interesting letters and believe me yours most seriously and sincerely.

GEORGE SAND.

TO MONSIEUR CHARLES-EDMOND

(a publisher)

Nohant, 9 *January*, 1858.

I cannot say with you that I feel much personal regret for Rachel.[1] I met her so seldom that her

[1] The great tragic actress, who died of consumption at the age of thirty-six.

death does not leave a blank in my life; but of course like everybody else, I feel that it is a great blow to art, that is to say to the Beautiful, that ideal which in all its forms is as necessary to us as Goodness and Truth.

We all run the risk of sinking to a lower level if no one climbs to a higher one, to point out to us that life should be lived on the heights, and not in the gutter. She had risen to greater heights than any dramatic artist of her time. What does it matter now that in her pivate life she made too persistent a search after reality. One might regret it keenly when one was in her presence, but all personalities have the point of view which is natural to them: behind the foot-lights she was a priestess and even a goddess. In the green room her divinity fell from her, but that did not prevent her from being a very good sort of woman; you have had proof of it and you will do well to keep a clear recollection of it.

Yes I promise you shall have *The Château des Étoiles*[1] (in passing I may mention that I am enjoying my scribbling very much just now, is that a good sign?) if it may be useful to you: I promise it to *you* and to no one else. If you leave the firm I shall withdraw my book. But you know I shall have to have a good deal of the money, perhaps all of it, when I deliver the manuscript though I may deliver it very soon. Please find out whether that would be possible, because if the contrary, then it is impossible for me to let you have the book.

For twenty-five years I have lived from hand to mouth, *and it cannot be otherwise and it is not my fault;* it is so literally the case that I was not able to buy a dress or a winter cloak this year because the accident of *La Presse* upset the order of my affairs altogether, and very real order it is in the midst of what the avaricious call my *disorder*. I know how to go without

[1] Title afterwards changed to *L'Homme de Neige.*

anything, sometimes without real necessities, but I should not like even a cat in my immediate circle to become aware of the fact.

So now I must say strictly between ourselves: See that they stick to the bargain. They failed me over *Bois-Doré* and I had expected a balance at my bank which would have allowed me to dress suitably for cold weather, and above all to clothe others who like myself cannot make use of the device of buying a blanket in place of wadding and silk.

So thanks to the blanket I am going to wrap myself up tomorrow to drive twelve miles in the open air. I am going to see the magnificent Creuse and its little frozen cascades. It will be your fault if I freeze; by dint of reading *La Groenland* I have fallen in love with glaciers, with Polar nights, tempests and icebergs.

Good-evening to you.

GEORGE SAND.

TO MADEMOISELLE LEROYER DE CHANTEPIE

Nohant, 5th June, 1858.

I do not believe a purer or more generous soul than yours is in existence and yet it will not find real salvation! This Catholic dogma is destroying you, and yet if I tell you to abandon it I may destroy your friendship and confidence in me. And yet it is my firm conviction that the dogma of Hell is a monstrosity, an imposture and a barbarity. God, who has shown us the law of progress and urges us on by it, *in spite of ourselves*, forbids us of the present day to believe in eternal damnation. It is impious to doubt His infinite mercy or to think that He will not *always* pardon, even the guiltiest.

Formerly I thought that the Catholic faith made you happier, and sweet tranquil beliefs in fine spirits seem

so sacred to me that I only felt moved to say to you : " Go to such and such a priest," or such and such a Christian philosopher, or such and such a friend who will be able to give you back your former serenity from which your noble nature drew its life and strength."

But now that doubt has entered into you, and that the priest's voice throws you into a giddy confusion, leave all priests alone and go straight to God, Who is calling you and is now apparently of opinion that your soul is so far enlightened that you can no more submit to the influence of an intermediary who is subject to human error.

But if habit, custom and the need of consecrated formulas still bind you to practice your cult, take to it the spirit of confidence, liberty and real faith which is in you. Do free yourself of that *idée fixe* which is gnawing at you, and which separates you from God. *God does not wish us to lose confidence in ourselves because that means loss of confidence in Him.* Your poor Agatha was very touching and you have been her guardian angel. For that reason alone you deserve that God should look upon you with an especial regard and deliver you from your doubts ; but we must do our part when grace is received by us, and you are not doing yours when you allow those phantasmagorias of the void and of perdition to invade your mind. It is that which is blameworthy, and not the actions of your life and the transports of your heart.

A few years ago I said to you : " *Go to Paris !* " but Paris has become an abyss given over to luxury and a fictitious existence, and you have let the years slip away. At our ages every year makes a change of regime and habits more difficult. At the same time I do think that you should visit Paris from time to time, even if it is only for a few days every year. You like art and music and all that sort of thing would be good for you and would dissipate the vapours that

your monotonous life engenders in the most fatal way. Distraction and forgetfulness of self are what you need.

Please believe, Mademoiselle, that I am grateful for and feel honoured by your friendship and that I am sincerely and faithfully yours.

GEORGE SAND.

TO OCTAVE FEUILLET

Nohant, 18 *February*, 1859.

I have been wanting to tell you, Monsieur, for quite a long time that I have a very particular admiration for your talent. Knowing you to be proud and modest, I was rather afraid of *scaring* you. Now that your great success must have made you perceive what you really are, I feel that you will better understand the need I have of expressing my applause. As I am living so far from Paris I have not had an opportunity of going to see *The Jeune Homme Pauvre*, but I sent for the play and I read it to an old friend of yours, who has also been a friend of mine for the last ten years. After that we talked about the play all day and about you, and I also wanted to read aloud several other ravishing little things which had escaped my attention before. Thus we spent two or three splendid days over you. Winter in the country is such a good time for reading, especially in an old house full of memories, surrounded by all the things, and with hearts full of all the feelings which you depict with so much charm and tender delicacy. It is very natural that after that, one is anxious to tell you about it and to thank you for all the exquisite hours that one owes to you. It would be ungrateful not to do it, would it not? And then I have reached a grandmotherly age and compliments from me can well be taken as blessings. So it

cannot be at all embarrassing for either of us. I do not ask you to be actually pleased with my letter, but I do beg you to believe it as a piece of absolute sincerity which among thousands of the same tributes may bring you good luck.

GEORGE SAND.

TO OCTAVE FEUILLET

Nohant, 27 February, 1859.

You consider that I have answered you in advance? Oh no! It is I who have to thank you for such a kind, sincere and affectionate letter. I cannot tell you what a lot of good it has done me. I keep it beside me like a talisman or a mascot. Everyone has days of melancholy in spite of the happiness to be found at one's own fire-side among old friends.

Without giving that up, one does still want to live the life of an artist, that is to say, one wants to feel that the religion of art, which is nothing but love of truth and goodness, still has its believers, but there are very few! Some have become sceptics through their own experiences, others because apparently their hearts are empty. Everyday one meets deserters and people who deny every faith even their faith in their mothers. One feels like Noah in the ark in one's little home surrounded by one's own tribe, navigating through the shades and wondering sometimes whether the sun has been blotted out. Then how good it is to see the dove arriving with the olive-branch, and that little bird of my garden as you call it, is the bird of life and a true son of Heaven, enlightened and illumined. When from time to time, I set foot on earth again, drenched by the deluge of the events of the past ten years, I seem to recognise all the evil of the past mingled with the evil we have now, a fever

which there is no explaining, always connected with something small and egoistical, jealous and false and low which used to be concealed in the old days but comes right out into the open now. And as in my solitude I have spent the time trying to become better than that, I feel that I am even more solitary in this suffering and tormented crowd to whom I have nothing to say, which will console and tranquillize it, since it seems incapable of understanding any longer.

But I become an artist again in my heart, I find hope and faith again when I see a fine action or a great work of art stir the heart of man once more, and when I see the ideal battling for glory and for success against the dark horizon. I have suffered on my own account, I have suffered much, but the age of *impersonality* having arrived, I should have found happiness by this time if I could think well of the generation rising around me. And then too my heart becomes attached to anything which is breaking through to life, and is growing. I have observed both processes in you, and you tell me that you are no longer very young ; all the better since you have ripened, without knowing the bite of the worm which dieth not! Sound fruit is so rare! And it carries within it the seed of moral and intellectual life destined to do battle against all the evil which the future may bring forth.

This poor century of ours which is so great in some ways and so small in others will count you among the good, among its consolers, among those who can carry a torch without allowing it to go out. Your letter shows me clearly that your talent springs from the heart, that is to say that it is rooted where it ought to be in order to spring up in eternal glowing flame.

When people worship at the same altar it is simply a duty for them to love each other : then let us love one another, we who are neither stupid nor evil. Let us believe, in defiance of cold cynics, that one may live many lives in one and yet rejoice in the glory, happiness

and force which flames out from God's good sunshine. When you read a fine work or see something marvellous does it not seem, in a way, as if you had produced it yourself, and yet that it is not the work of this one, that one, or yourself, but belongs to all who are capable of plunging their minds into it, and drinking of it?

Yes, those are the true joys of the artist: they really consist in feeling and perceiving this fertile life lived in common with others, which becomes extinguished in the artist, as soon as he refuses to mix in it. And yet there are actually people who get sad and discouraged before the works of other people, and would like to annihilate them. Poor wretches, they do not understand that this is a form of suicide! They want to taint the well, but then they will have to die of thirst beside it.

I am going up to Paris at the end of March I think. Will you be there then, and will you come to see me? Yes, you will, won't you? Or if not come and see me here and be a Lotus-eater too! It is not ten hours' journey from Paris. Let me hope for that, for one only sees people in Paris, in a breathless hurry, and in the meanwhile I greet you with all my heart.

G. SAND.

TO M. DESPLANCHES

Nohant, 26 *December*, 1859.

Yes, Monsieur, I shall find courage for anything. I know that I must; for I did not throw myself into the fight from love of the fight, I did not foresee it, for a moment. I was young then and *I knew I was an artist*. I have grown old in the struggle, and have never ceased to be astonished at the hatred that has been lavished upon me, but every day my conviction has

become more settled that *when one has faith one cannot turn back.* I have wished to, and tried to, in vain, but love of Truth has been too strong for me. I am weak naturally, but I love Truth so much that it urges and carries me on, and everything which is not Truth leaves me entirely indifferent.

Thank you for your letter. It comes from a great heart and a noble mind. You must surely believe that such encouragement must a hundred times outweigh the insults of bigots in my mind. Thanks once more. I am yours from my heart.

G. Sand.

TO MADEMOISELLE LEROYER DE CHANTEPIE

Nohant, 12 *February*, 1860.

Dear Mademoiselle,

I should like to be able to see from your point of view and to find some anchor of salvation for you in your own belief. But I have no belief in the Catholic institution, and all formal rites in the practice of the cult, merely seem to me to be so many obstacles between God and the soul which has arrived at consciousness of itself. You, yourself revolt against the priest's pretensions to efficacy since you cannot find one who is able to console and reassure you.

Your idea of God is a too narrow one, and you can only look upon Him as a judge fashioned in the image of man. I must say that surprises me from a great heart and mind like yours. Your brain is not equal to the rest and must be a sick brain in some way. I have often told you that you need change of surroundings, you ought to travel a little, to go to Paris, and somehow or other, shake off this black melancholy which is destroying you, which cannot be pleasing to Divinity and is certainly not useful to your fellows.

If it is a virtue to torment yourself as you are doing, or at any rate if it is the proof of great modesty of soul and a great transport of yearning towards Heaven you have suffered enough, you have torn and mortified your heart enough to be quite sure at present that the expiation is complete, that you are entirely purified from those imagined sins of yours in which I do not believe at all.

Do get over that depression of yours; for even if you were really a great criminal, God the source of all kindness and goodness will not have us disbelieve in Him, neither will He permit us to think so much about ourselves, for life is not nearly long enough to fulfil our tribute of love and gratitude to Him as it is. It is more religious to live in contemplation of His perfection than to be continually examining our own weaknesses with so much fear and solicitude. Believe me to be always grateful for your affection and much afflicted by your troubles.

GEORGE SAND.

TO ALEXANDRE DUMAS FILS

Nohant, 11 *Dec.*, 1860.

DEAR BOY,

I should like to know what preparation of iron is being administered to you. Iron is a very fashionable medicine and very popular, but every doctor is not a chemist, and in prescribing iron quite rightly at times, they do not always know, even the cleverest of them in what form it is most advantageously assimilated by the particular digestion it is being thrust into, and in what other forms it merely loads the stomach, turns into ink and fails to digest altogether. I have an old friend, who is both doctor and chemist, who has taken up the use of iron and its various preparations as his

perpetual hobby, and he has been using this remedy and experimenting in it for years. I have made numerous experiments with him and I *know* that he is right to say that only one preparation of iron is always digestible under any circumstances and never harmful. To cut the matter short, see whether your prescriptions include the following: *Tartr. fer. potass. Crist. en paillettes*. If they have, you may sleep in peace and be sure that iron will cure you. If not do not take too much, indeed you had better not take it at all. I know that you probably have all the "top dogs" of the medical world at your elbow. But perhaps they have not had time to analyse these details minutely. And finally, though you must take good care of yourself, do not take too much care; the best remedy for everything is moderation in everything for a time, except in fresh air; you should get as much of that as possible in the country, and forget yourself as much as possible.

Excitement is the snare of people like us, but it is also quite wrong to try and suppress it altogether, for you and I have not the mental build of sluggards or positivists, and total absence of emotion, of work, even of fatigue throws us into a condition of atony, which is the greatest possible enemy of our organisations.

Our doctors do well to restrain the pace we live at from time to time, but those doctors and friends who try to tie us down to medical remedies and absolute rest are killing us as surely as any galloping horse would be.

I have the king of doctors: a man whose name is not well-known, but a man who knows that one person differs from another person! The day after my worst day in my late illness he let me eat because I was hungry. The day after that he let me take coffee because I am accustomed to it, and he consented to let me get out of bed, because I have a horror of staying

in bed. He let me laugh and talk and *try* to throw off the malady. He knew, he knows, I know and I feel also, that ever since my existence began when I think of illness, I feel ill. In earlier days I used to have severe attacks of hypochondria quite foreign to my nature and it was all the fault of friends and doctors who assigned to me ten times more illnesses than I had got. Guard against that. You tell me that you are discouraged, and feel that you are attacked by real failure of health. Don't say that to anyone but me because there are so many people who *would be rejoiced to hear it!* And do not let it be said anywhere that you are seriously ill. Think of all the jealous ones who would rub their hands over it: everyone is jealous! Not only your rivals in your work, but all the idlers and all the incapables who suffer when they are compelled to look on at a triumphant and brilliant existence.

Nearly the whole public is fickle and loves to see the favourite who was hailed with incense yesterday, relapse into hesitation and suffering; but they will offer the incense again to-morrow if the patient will but hold on, and prove his toughness. You have had a lot of worry with theatre business lately I know: too much mischief-making, uncertainty and impatience and a thousand other things that I can guess at, knowing that circle well, and knowing well how these immense vexations are forged. You must feel it more than I should, and more than anyone else would, because after your recent stage-successes you have a right to impose your thought, your forms, your legitimate exactions, using all the daring, all the sovereign freedom of your talent.

You too have struck the financial difficulty; the theatre has been losing a little and there you are, up against the peril of this century: money. Your talent has increased, but if the theatre is taking less money, the director's faith in you will ebb away and also that of all the various people whose intervention

is necessary to reveal your genius to the public. The public itself is astonished that you are "growing up," in the science of life. The public has its own routine and rapid progress only makes it giddy. It always resists and fights that as well as it can. As long as one has any fear of the public, or shows it any consideration, it thinks it has power against you, but at bottom it has a good heart and will return to you and be as passionately assiduous as before, *if you never bend before it*. Get well soon, amuse yourself a little, and forget all these painful struggles, and if you do allow it to be said that you are ill and discouraged, let it only be in order to throw your crutch away one fine morning and show yourself stronger than ever.

There, dear boy, that is what I have been wanting to say to you for several days, but until now I have not been strong enough to write more than a page or two. Come and see me when the weather is better and when you are not so hampered by your treatment.

I am planning to go down to the Riviera in February. You ought to do the same. Come, come, you must recover that great physical and intellectual energy which has inspired such fine work in you.

Remember that you have been the spoilt child of destiny and that you are still, for your least successes would be the greatest successes of other people.

If you feel low and weak tell yourself that it is all for the best, for with a good constitution these crises often precede a superb intellectual and artistic *revival*. Be patient, go about smiling and never stop repeating: "it will soon be over." When you are quite convinced of that three parts of it *will* be over.

I embrace you tenderly.

GEORGE SAND.

TO MONSIEUR AND MADAME ERNEST PERIJOIS

(Friends at Nice)

Tamaris, 20th February, 1861.

DEAR CHILDREN,

We have arrived and we are even settled down half an hour (by sea) from Toulon, on the far side of Toulon and in consequence a long way from Hyères, Nice and all the other places which follow on. Maurice having gone forth as harbinger, considered Hyères a very prosaic place full of invalids and English people, with no little place to make oneself at home in, no solitude, and nothing to be got in the neighbourhood which was not very dear and very inconvenient.

Then he explored the coast-road of Toulon and took three parts of a little country-house for five hundred francs for three months. It is very bourgeoise but very clean, and its owner a solicitor at Toulon is not using it at present and has never let it before. He is a charming man who came himself to settle us in and went away again this morning. We have been here for twenty-four hours, have had weather only fit for a dog, but the house is excellently situated, close to the open sea, at the foot of mountains, and we ourselves are on a hill covered with superb pine-trees which conceal us entirely and frame one of the finest views in the world for us. It is absolute solitude and there are no inquisitive people hanging round; the bad roads protect us from loiterers; but we are very comfortable and life is easy all the same because we are quite near a little town called *La Seyne*. We have a very good cook for twenty-five francs a month, an excellent girl, and for a larger wage, a confidential man-servant whom we knew something of, and so we are settled in marvellously well and very cheaply. We are in a splendid climate in spite of the weather lately, at the

most southerly point of France, in the midst of a quite African flora.

If you want to carry out another winter campaign in this lovely country we will apply to friends who will help you to find something of the same sort as we have. But I admit that we should have found it impossible to find these quarters of ours without the help of our local admirers; for this is not a fashionable place exploited for visitors.

How can I manage to offer you hospitality now? I had hoped that my solicitor-proprietor would leave the rest of the house at my disposal for he is not coming here himself until June, but I cannot persuade him to do that because he wants to come here all the time. That is what it is to have to do with a man who does not go in for the commercial point of view at all; it also has its inconvenient sides. But if you come back this way we will go to meet you at Toulon at the Hôtel de la Croix d'Or which is very good, or at Hyères which we want to visit as soon as it is fine. You must come and spend a day at our hermitage and we will take you back *by land* if you fear a quarter of an hour's fairly strong swell. Our bad roads are not dangerous in any way. They are muddy, that is all, but two days of mistral clean them up completely. Try to accomplish this hope of mine: or if you are going to stay on at Nice we will go and see you there. At any rate keep us supplied with news of your continued existence at the address of *Charles Poncy, Toulon.*

Many many kind thoughts for you and kisses for Angèle.

GEORGE SAND.

TO CHARLES DUVERNET

(An old friend at Nevers)

Tamaris, 15 *March*, 1861.

DEAR OLD FRIEND,

I am addressing my letter to Nevers though I think you are probably at Coudray; but I have done it because I know it will be forwarded to the right address fron Nevers, whilst if I send it to Coudray it may not get the same treatment.

I got your letter and I am delighted to hear that the little fellow is giving you all the joys of *grand-paternity!* I underline the word! Alas! Here we have an example of the way in which one thing is compensated for by another for every one of us. Before my eyes I have the azure seas, the glorious mountains, the enchanting flowers of this coast, but these same eyes will never see anything of my Nini again but her portrait, she who was above everything else the pearl and flower of the close of my life. I shall never feel her on my knee nor in my arms again; I shall never hear her voice again, I shall have no more dealings with her in this life again. But we must submit. The reason of our lives, and the objects of them are not to be understood by us; they are the work and the will of God. They cannot turn out to be bad, and after this life everything will surely be compensation, for once it is over, everything points to the idea of equilibrium and reward.

Maurice has been over to Hyères for the second time, more or less urged by momentary dislike for Tamaris where the mistral sometimes blows with incredible violence for several days running.

I was not very well and he said that if he found a more equable climate at Hyères he would move me over there. But he found that it was just the same hurricanes alternating with a series of splendid days.

He has called on M. Germain at his chateau of St. Pierre-des-Horts, which is very fine and picturesque. His host made him very welcome and offered to let some charming rooms very cheaply for me, which was extremely nice of him.

But I am quite settled here and moving house is such a business in this country, where even quite close to the towns, the resources and means of communication are very poor. We do not travel about by land much, as the roads are very much neglected and necessarily make immense curves round the bays of this much indented coast. The sea is the best means of communication and when it is rough as it often has been this month one feels rather cut-off and isolated here. We have now overcome all the first little difficulties by getting into touch with the local resources and finally by taking on a very active and intelligent commissionaire, after having tried two others who were charming boys, but not very shrewd, far less acute than my peasants of Berri, and as frightened of rain as any cat!

There is no medium here in character and temperament. They are all absolute ciphers or else bristling with energy. Nicholas-Napoleon manages the housekeeping very well; the cook Rosine who is a simple fright as to looks, laughs and sings all day long. The donkey goes to market without kicking, the dog has adopted us as masters and the hens follow me about as they do at Nohant.

We get excellent fish brought to us alive out of the sea and we have learnt now that we must not expect them when the *mistral* is blowing. We have also procured a few tables, for though our maritime Coudray is sufficiently furnished is other ways, tables are articles of luxury here. One is not expected to read or write, one only comes to the country to be out of doors and to sleep. So here we are very well housed, resigned to the storms and considerably

compensated by the possibility of doing good work and by the beauty of the wonderful days which succeed the hurricanes. The spring bursts out in the midst of these hurricanes as if they had never existed. The solid pines of Alep with their majestic parasols, the wrinkled-leaved cork-trees take the blast unmoving and never break; the ever-green plants are equally defiant of it and the olive-trees are none the less silvery pale. Among these insensitive organisms the real spring blossom and leaf is beginning to smile. The tamarisks and the cork-trees in bud, the mauve and purple anemones strew the earth and the orchis blooms in the shade.

In a wood near-by I found the *epipactis céphalante* which is not found in my own district and is, I think, very rare anywhere. It is a snow-white orchis with a golden patch on its lip: a very elegant, seductive flower. I have been over to Saint-Maudrier, which is a naval hospital with a fine botanical garden, to see very tall palms and other exotics, some groves of pepper-trees covered with their pretty red seeds and some *sterculies* whose scent which is expressed by the name is not precisely that of the rose.[1]

All that has wandered very far from my reference to Docteur Germain. To come back to him, Maurice who was hoping to see his splendid collections in various branches of natural history incurred the disappointment of discovering that they only exist in the prospectus; but the personage himself struck Maurice as a serious scholar and a very able man. I am certainly hoping to go next month to see him and his mediæval castle of which Maurice brought me several photographs sent by the doctor himself. It all fits in well because the said doctor is at this moment *en route* for Nièvre, where he will spend a week. It is possible that another year having now discovered these nice quarters at Saint-Pierre, I shall go there for

[1] Stercus (Latin) dung.

the whole season. I have been working hard on *Lessivage de Valvedre* since I came here. I am just finishing off that big work. Good-night, old friend. This is another long talk, but I have suddenly come to an end of my paper. Tender greetings to you all and best remembrances from here.

G. Sand.

TO MADAME PAULINE VILLOT

Tamaris, 11th May, 1861.

Dear Cousin,

You really are an angel to exert yourself so graciously for me and to take so much trouble in this affair which really troubles me very little. Lucien must have told you all the very true and logical reasons which have made me wish that my name had not been mentioned. I did not wish however, to disavow friends who have helped me in my career, all the more because I had and still have a feeling of certainty that in this matter they would fail.

I have made too vigorous a war on hypocrites, ever to be forgiven by the official religious world. And I do not want its forgiveness. I would much rather they gave me a shove towards their *Hell* to which they commit all honestly sincere people.

But with regard to this affair of the Académie[1] there is something fresh which I want to discuss with you. Buloz, whose style is not always by any means of the clearest, has written to me that someone came to him to ask him to sound me, and to find out whether I would accept a compensation from the Emperor, admittedly offered as an equivalent to the prize of the Académie Francaise, if that prize is not bestowed upon me.

[1] Some of George Sand's literary friends had attempted to obtain the "*couronne*" of the Académie-Française for her.

I answered that I really do not desire anything, but I urged Buloz to present my refusal in the form of very sincere and very grateful thanks. Now as a commission of that sort however frank and explicit it may be, sometimes becomes distorting in passing from one mouth to another, I want you to see Prince Jerome, who is always sincere and reliable, and to give him this message from me: "There is no foolish pride, no party-spirit, no shade of ingratitude in refusing this benefit from the Emperor. If I were ill, infirm or destitute, I should perhaps ask him for myself what I have often begged from the Empress and the Ministers for the unfortunate. But my health is good, I can work and I have no pressing needs. It does not seem honest to me to accept generosity which people far more to be pitied, have a real right to. If the Académie should award the prize to me I should accept it, not without some regret, but in order to avoid the pose of haughty writer and in order that the consecration of public opinion may be given to the morals of those of my works which have been pronounced immoral. In that fashion the Emperor's generous intentions would be fully carried out. If, as I am quite sure myself, I am excluded from the competition I shall not regard myself as deprived of a sum of money which I never desired and for which I am fully compensated by the interest of the Emperor in my case." There. Please tell him that.

At present I am saying all that *in case* . . . as I do not know whether Buloz quite understood what I meant him to say nor whether it is true that the Emperor is much interested in the matter.

Buloz told me that Princess Mathilde *would undertake all that* without further explanation. If Princess Mathilde is alone concerned, Prince Jerome will know and will explain the whole matter to her as the notaries say. If he recommends it I will write to that excellent princess to thank her and to the Emperor if

there really is reason to. Please also tell Prince Jerome from me, that I am his, with all my heart's affection, and that I am going to see his yacht to-morrow in Toulon harbour: for I see that he will not be coming here yet awhile and I am very glad he is not thinking of putting out to sea for the weather is still horribly stormy, nearly always.

Yesterday, though there was a great swell on I went to visit his Majesty's royal yacht. It is enchanting. Lucien must have told you all about it; for he was able to view it before I did.

I am terribly worried because Maurice wants to make a tour in Africa. Of course I understand his wanting to, but I am afraid that he will not want to wait until the weather improves and then I shall be atrociously anxious. However, I do not say much to him, for we must not make cowards of our children by running counter to their wishes, nor spoil their pleasure by admitting our own anxieties.

Good-night, my dear, kind cousin, all tender greetings to your husband and the dear children.

G. Sand.

TO ALEXANDRE DUMAS FILS

Nohant, 8 *July*, 1861.

Dear Son,

I have been back at Nohant only a few hours after an absence of four months. I have explored Provence and Savoy. What a paradise, Savoy round Chambéry is! I am looking and feeling better than the Pont Neuf, itself! I am sunburnt to the colour of a brick!

The peasant of Berri looks small, thin and ugly after the people I have been among, but they are always such good fellows! Is one only to admire what is ornamental, proud and superb! I also love my old

house and though pleased at having scampered over mountain-tops I am so glad to see my flat country and wide blue horizons again. That is my news. Maurice got tired of always looking at the sea at Tamaris and never crossing it. He has flown off for a month in Africa. I have had letters from him and he is wild with enthusiasm. However, I expect him back soon.

Now for you. I received your nice long letter at Tamaris (near Toulon) and I answered you from there, did you never receive mine? You told me to write to Genoa. I wrote to Genoa, but I suppose you were already gone. You tell me less about your health in the letter that I received to-day when I arrived home, which was written on the 21st May.

You tell me that you are a little better. A little is not enough. But I cannot believe that you will not get the upper hand soon. Being so young, so well organised and so highly gifted *you can do what you will to do*. I shall expect you here at Nohant any day this summer, and if you keep your promise, I should love you even better than I do, if that is possible. That being written, I am going to fall very sound asleep, for my head is still full of the rattle of trains and the blowing of whistles and the roar of stations and tunnels; but I did not want to rest before sending you a mother's greeting with all my heart.

G. Sand.

Oh! I was forgetting to tell you about the Academie. I do not know why I have been put into the running, and why I have not been *couronnée*, nor why I should have been! But there is a whole world quite unknown to me between me and this areopagus, consisting of preambles and *buts* and *ifs* and *becauses* and *althoughs* of which I do not understand, and shall never understand anything. My conclusion is that it is all the same to me and that I live on a very charming planet all blossoming with dreams, where I

have suffered, wept, loved and glorified the name of God, and where I have never been heard to mention the Academie, or literary grievances. You, my child, understand exactly what I mean.

TO SAINTE-BEUVE

Nohant, 8th May, 1861.

My Friend,

I have just arrived from Savoy and Provence. I disembarked at Nohant this evening after four months of wandering. I then found your letter of 14th February which arrived here that day, two hours after my departure.

I do not wish to go to sleep without thanking you for the testimony of affection which you have given me and without telling you how much I appreciate your affectionate solicitude in the whole affair of the Académie and its crown.

Knowing perfectly well that you would never succeed in getting it for me, I have paid very little attention to my own concern in it, but knowing how vigorously you were fighting for me, and how kindly, I have felt very happy, in the thought of your brotherly care for me and always shall. Thank you with all my heart and please believe that if I am worth anything, I am more than recompensed by your friendship alone. I do not aspire to any other glory. However, tell the Académie that from my rejected candidature they should find their way to award their Virtue Prize to Pubet[1] whose claims are incontestable.

My travels had the effect of making me ill at first, but the last part of them simply entranced me. Provence and Savoy are geologically rather similar and yet display the most complete contrasts.

The volcanic dislocation of the former might have occurred yesterday, while in Savoy it is all clothed

[1] A peasant of her own district.

with the most fascinating vegetation in the world and really is an earthly Paradise. No doubt you have seen it all for yourself. I saw Buloz down there and he talked a great deal about you and all that you had done for me.

That Buloz has bought himself an Eden! It includes waterfalls, precipices, gigantic trees, splendid pastures, rocks and an immense villa. He has a very pretty daughter and a wife whom I have always liked very much.

I have made a little progress in botany, but pity me for I cannot manage to see the *od* in detail, only in the mass! Do you know what the *od* is? Y es, I am sure you do because you know everything.

Good-evening, my friend. Thanks again—thank you always and for ever. I have so much pleasure in taking up your *Causeries de Lundi* again, for I did not get them all read before I went away.

Yours most sincerely,

P.S. Maurice is in Africa, full of enthusiasm. He is coming home soon.

TO CHARLES PONCY

Nohant, 30th June, 1861.

Dear Boy,

Maurice asks me to give you a message that he is at Oran on the *Jerome-Napoleon*. Prince Jerome picked him up at Algiers and has taken him to Cadiz, Lisbon and perhaps they will cross to America, and in consequence he will not be passing near Toulon and will not be able to come and see you just now, but he is thinking of you and sends you a brother's greetings. So, my dear son, is seeing the world and I am rejoiced at it in spite of a little sorrow and anxiety which I keep

carefully hidden from him, for he would come home rather than grieve me and I do not want him to lose such a splendid opportunity of travelling pleasantly.

Tell all our friends where he is and that he much hoped to have come to see them if this unforeseen luck had not come to him. Remember me too, to all the good people round you.

Since our arrival I have been working like the very devil. I have finished my novel, corrected it and sent it off. At present I am hard at work arranging my botanical specimens and each Riviera plant that I see reminds me of our walks, of the beautiful places that I know so well, Ragas, Doudon, Montrieux, the sandstone rocks of Saint-Anne, Dardenne, etc. Do you remember the old man who was breaking stones at Pierrepeu and the bean plants which were springing up all the same? And then the *sans-feuilles* that you could not find a French name for, and the little blue woodruff that Solangette used to gather for me in the neighbouring field, and all your so-called lilies of the valley . . . etc! I am going through them all now and making their toilet. I feel as if it were already a long time since I left you because everything here is so different, faces, climate and flora! I miss the Provençal accent and its inseparable companion the *mistral*. I can still see Bon-Maza in the arms of Nicholas and I repeat his favourite song:

"*Nicholas, demain ta fête.*"

And that poor Leda? I do hope she will not go too far afield and be assassinated by some dangerous tramp in her search for us! If she had the wit to come as far as this I will guarantee that she would get a warm welcome.

But now, my dear boy, let us turn to your affairs. Has your good health come back to stay? It is evident that you were in a debilitated condition and that you will have to rebuild your digestion.

And is poor Solange[1] still "sent to Coventry" at school because of her god-mother. Oh! what wicked people the priests are nowadays! . . . By the way there is a rumour that the Pope is dead and that they are keeping it dark. What will be the result of that death? It would have been a good thing if it could have happened instead of poor Cavour's.

What is Désirée doing? Is she as *tired* as ever? And have you gone to Mer-Vive in this great heat? Désirée is a charming woman, an angelic creature with a most sweet distinguished face. You say that she lacks energy at times, but it seems to me that Solange has enough for two and that is a very good arrangement of our Creator I think. They will love each other all the better for their differences and I also consider the charming Anais a precious asset to the family. But now it is three o'clock in the morning and I hope that you are all snoring, even you, who sleep so little, but I hope you are not amusing yourself by sitting up for the comet. It is rather fine, is it not? What a tail! It must get up over Saint-Maudrier and be over Mer-Vive and Tamaris between ten and eleven at night and must set behind the Gorge of Ollioules, or a little to the left of it. Tell me if it is like that. We have only had a glimpse of it this evening. We have had a week of rain to the great joy of the inhabitants, for there has been a two months' drought. I must go to bed now. Good-night, dear children. I kiss all four of you most tenderly.

Maurice is thirty-eight to-day and in five days I shall be fifty-seven. We have hardly ever passed our birthdays without being able to kiss each other. By way of compensation Solange is here and sends you many compliments and greetings.

[1] Poncy's daughter, called after Solange Clésinger.

TO HER SON MAURICE

(On board Prince Jerome's yacht, the Jerome-Napoleon)

Nohant, 27 *July*, 1861.

DEAR CHILD,

I am sure it is no use writing to you. You see, while your letters are getting to Nohant you are all the time going beyond the stations that you have told me to write to. I just send my letters on the chance, but I have written many which you will probably never receive. However, I got your letter from the Azores, this morning. Oh! how far away you are, dear boy! And by this time how many hundreds of miles further still! But you are quite well, you have fine weather, you are seeing the most curious and interesting things, I receive your letters, I tell myself constantly that you are enjoying yourself and I arm myself with all possible courage against worrying about you at all. My health is very good, in spite of a frightful summer, just like last year's. Your sister has just gone away after spending a month here. We have also had Alexandre Dumas Fils, and Bérangère. We talk a great deal about you as you can well believe. I am working like a nigger as usual. You know that is proof that I am well. I hug you a thousand times. The Exhibition is over and the medals are awarded. There was nothing for you, or Lambert or Manceau.

I am going to write to Madame Villot about your water-colours, but I doubt if her husband can do anything. I hug you again. Oh! *when* will they be real hugs? But do not be uneasy about me. I am quite reasonable and so happy about anything that makes you happy! Tell Prince Jerome that I have written to him several times about you. I have also written to Ferri.

TO HER SON MAURICE

Nohant, 1st September, 1861.

I see by your letters that while rendering their full due to the Americans you feel a mixture of astonishment and discomfort in their society, and that the great question of individual liberty which you have perhaps never thought out presents itself to you heavy with clouds in the land of individualism. I do not know what your conclusions will be when you return, but I can tell you what my own are in my quiet corner here after finishing a very fine book which I consider is an epitome of all the heart and mind of America. It is by the American Unitarian minister Channing. Perhaps you are going too rapidly through that remarkable man's country to hear his name mentioned, or at any rate, to be able to estimate the influence which he might have over the minds of his countrymen. I must sum them up for you in two sentences.

1. *Reason*—man's first and principal guide.
2. *Individual Liberty*—man's first and principal right.

It seems very dry presented like that and you may be astonished when you come to read this philosopher to find in him, the enthusiasm of extraordinary charity, eloquence which springs from the heart, indeed all the qualities of a real apostle.

But like me you will have to conclude and you will admit, in concluding, that this honest man is sterile as an apostle, and that this heart of gold is self-deceiving.

Channing has only one doctrine : the Gospel. And he draws from it a truly admirable tolerance. Although a Protestant his communion embraces every kind of dissenter from Protestantism, even Catholics. He opens the Unitarian Temple of faith and eternal salvation to all men, whatever their creed,

who wish to enter it, with this formula : " I love God and my neighbour in the spirit of Christ."

He does not insist on belief in the divinity of Jesus if one's reason refuses to admit it, nor will he permit mockery of those whose reason can admit that divinity. He wants those who believe most and those who believe least to love one another, while loving God. They are not allowed to damn one another, nor contradict one another, and no one is to interfere with other people's business. If only this were possible what could be better, but has Channing found the road to the *temple of liberty and reason upheld by faith?*

He certainly says everything beautiful, good and true which should lead men to it, but he extends his tolerance to every action of civil and political life. According to him the form, the name and the essence of the government matters very little. No law worries him at all, everything appears possible to him if men will only have a spirit of charity and the questing mind required for all examination. That is true, but if they have not got it one must find some way of giving it to them and since the world began men have dreamed of forming individuals and raising the moral senses of society by means of institutions. And since the world began the average level has been very much below the conceptions of the great minds which have fired the masses with enthusiasm and carried them away. Proof in the first place : Jesus crucified.

Moreover, what use are institutions ? If Channing is logical he ought not to say :

" Never mind what institutions "—

He ought to go straight to the point and say :

" No institutions at all."

And you will see that he says it :

" The individual is more than the State. He is not made to sacrifice and devote himself. It is the State which ought to be devoted to him and to protect him.

The State is only instituted to guarantee and respect the rights of the individual."

There you have the law of the prophet; there is the essence of unitarianism and in that sense it is no longer the unity in religion of "*Be ye all as one in Jesus Christ*"; still less the political and national unity which Italy is pursuing and that all the down-trodden nations of Europe are dreaming of. It simply means "Each one for himself and God for us all!" Now God Himself, Who is Logic above all, cannot be for the millions of contrary parties which divide humanity into millions of individual particles. Happily for us God looks down on us from above, God knows how to wait, God takes no part in our quarrels and He is for everyone of us in this world in this sense only, that He is for all, who seek the Light. The State, which cannot claim Divinity, must however seek to follow the example of God in logic, patience, universal protection gentleness and provident fertility. By all means let it leave all possible liberty to the individual and let that be recognised as one of the principal duties of the State—certainly. But the State cannot take the place of God, whether it be called Republic, King or Pope, it cannot act as God can, waiting for us in eternity and for all eternity. It cannot abandon individuals with the apparent impunity in which God leaves us, and as the State has to act within the limits of time and space, it has not discovered and never will discover any way of leaving us all absolutely free unless we were able to become perfect.

"Be perfect," said Channing, "love one another!" Yes, a hundred times yes! But that is beginning at the end of the great romance of the future. Other Protestants of the past, the Hussites proclaimed that: "The day will come when there will be no more law or authority in the holy city."

I think too that the time will come. But we are

hardly at the first dawn of our intellectual and moral existence. The Gospel of St. John will one day be as clear as sunlight and we shall love one another because we shall be good and rational. There will be no need of expounding the law which will be in all hearts; no one will consult the Bible to find out how to rule their conduct. We shall all be angels in the *holy city*.

But where is the holy city? On another planet or can it be here? Why not in another? Our soul, is free, thus it is immortal and can exist in any sphere. And why should the holy city not be here? We have got the idea of perfectibility and we are able to transform this world and render it divine by bequeathing the works and conquests of each generation to the next as it succeeds.

But we are far from that end and if Channing's ideal is great, if it is realisable and I am persuaded that it is, it will not be achieved through the doctrine of individualism. I deny that doctrine with all my conscience, all my heart and all my faith.

Channing is mistaken in that, and many Europeans attracted by the audacity of this optimist's buoyant and enthusiastic heart have fallen in love with his religious tolerance which was really the work of the Eighteenth Century in France.

TO HER SON MAURICE

(on board the Jerome-Napoleon)

Nohant, 10*th October*, 1861.

I had a letter from Madame Villot to-day saying that you ought to be at Havre to-day 10th and would probably be in Paris on the 11th.

At last! At last! How long have I been waiting to see you *really* arrive and to hug you! Perhaps you

will need to spend two or three days in Paris. Make them as short as possible for I have been rather stupid for the last month. I had plenty of courage up to that time, but you know that the last stages of a journey are the hardest to go. You will find another letter from me in Paris which I wrote when I thought you were going to arrive on the 25th.

But I received your letters from Saint-Louis, Niagara, New York on your return from Quebec, and I found patience again. You are a good boy to write to me from every place. It has upheld me so far. I hope at the latest for the 15th. On the 16th and 17th we are giving one of my plays here. You will learn that the most successful of the plays we give here are printed in the Revue and then the theatres apply to me for them. Such are the caprices of directors.

You must be tired of the sea, my poor child, and have a perpetual roll in your legs; I hope you have had calm weather. If you do not linger too long you will find hot August weather here. We have had it all the summer. It is really exceptional weather; we are all in summer clothes.

What a lot you will have to tell me. I have bought a superb map of America on which you can trace out your whole journey for me.

I hug you a thousand times. Everyone here is making holiday because you are coming. I dreamt all night that you had arrived.

At last! At last!

TO CHARLES PONCY

Nohant, 20 *October*, 1861.

At last Maurice has arrived safe and sound and I have had him here for a week. He was seven days crossing from Newfoundland to Brest. He has seen the great Lakes, the great prairies, the Indians, Niagara,

the aurora borealis in the North, the mists of Newfoundland, the gardens of the South full of humming birds, the battle-fields, the camps of the two armies, the virgin forests, and I don't know what! It has been a "limping" tour, but taken all round an extremely interesting one and he is very pleased with it. He looks as strong as any Turk; he has passed rapidly through every kind of climate, and made constant changes of diet without suffering from the slightest indisposition.

You can imagine how pleased I am, can you not? I was really beginning to lose courage and in consequence to feel rather unwell, but I am quite recovered and have taken up my work again.

And have you been very energetic in this heat? We have had a strong dose of it ourselves. Twenty-five degrees Centigrade in the shade during the summer, and it is still twenty-five degrees. There has also been a drought harmful to the crops, but as far as I am concerned it suits me very well. There is not a breath of wind and our sky is as blue as yours.

I have had good news from Madame Tracy of her family and of Tamaris. They are all well even dear Bon-Maza for whom you made us wear mourning, I do not know why.

I have been wanting to write to you for such a long time, but I have so many people staying here in September and October that there is really no time for communicating with the absent. The house is never empty, but by November they are all gone and one returns to rational conditions.

TO ALEXANDRE DUMAS FILS

Nohant, 7th November, 1861.

My Dear Son,

The mere fact of my dedication giving you pleasure is enough thanks for me without your saying a single

word. You gave me a hearty kiss at Nohant and all your thanks were in that. People want to make me out a personage, but I only want to be your "mother." The fact that you are fond of me shows that you have a heart and that is all I want. I have never been conscious of *superiority* in any direction, because I have never been able to accomplish all that I have dreamed and conceived, except in a way utterly inferior to my ideal. Therefore no one will ever make me believe that I know better than other people. Having remained a child myself in so many ways what I admire most in characters of your strong individuality, is their kind-heartedness and their doubt of their own powers. In the sense I mean, those are the principles of their vitality; for whosoever crowns himself with his own hands has said his last word. If he is not done for altogether one may at least say that he has come to an end of himself and may keep his end up, but will not be able to go any further.

Then try to keep your soul young and quivering, right up to old age, and to imagine right up to the brink of death that life is only beginning. I think that is the only way to keep adding to one's talent, to one's affections and one's inner happiness.

This feeling that the *All* is greater, finer, stronger and more beautiful than oneself, keeps one always within the lovely dream which is called the illusion of youth, and which I call the Ideal, that is to say the vision and sense of what is true raised above the eights of heaven. *In spite of all that has combined to rend me, I am an optimist.* That is perhaps my only good quality. You will see that you will acquire it too.

At your age I was tormented too and more out of health than you are, both physically and morally. Tired at last of digging into my own soul and other people's I said at last one fine day: "It is all the same to me. The universe is great and beautiful. Everything that we think full of importance is so fugitive

that it is not worth thinking about. There are only two or three true and serious things in life, and those are precisely the things which I have ignored and disdained: *mea culpa!* But I have been punished for my folly, I have suffered as much as anyone can suffer so perhaps I have merited forgiveness. Let us humbly approach to make peace with Almighty God."

Now if my pride had been incurable I should have fallen never to rise again; but I had what you have, the power of estimating right and wrong, a quality which seems very rare nowadays. And then I had no great adoration for myself and I was able to forget myself. There is nothing to prevent you from recovering. You are not vain, nor are you a fool; you are not cowardly and as success, which unfortunately often engenders those three vices has not changed you: *the future is still yours!* Be sure of it. Ten years from now you will tell me that I was right to believe in you.

The Villots are going away on Monday morning; on Sunday evening we are going to play *Ruzzante*. Marchal is going to try the marionettes with Maurice to-morrow. We shall try to get him to stay on a little so that you may find him here when you come, for we hope to see you soon or at once if possible. Hein? You promise? We shall count on it and expect you.

TO PRINCE JEROME[1]

Nohant, 7th January, 1862.

DEAR PRINCE,

We have been made *happier than kings* by the good news announced in the papers and we have spent the

[1] Prince Jerome Napoleon was a nephew of Napoleon I, son of Napoleon's brother Jerome and the Princess of Wirtemburg. He was a man of intellect and ideas. Attracted by George Sand's genius and the sensible moderate part she took in public affairs, he called upon her in December, 1851. She happened to be out and hearing of her disappointment he visited her again, and from this visit, a life-long friendship developed. In 1859 he married Clotilde, daughter of Victor Emmanuel of Italy, and this letter refers to the impending birth of their eldest child, a son.

day weaving romances about this son or daughter which Heaven has promised you. Sprung from you and from the great Napoleon and also from the heroic Victor-Emmanuel and his daughter whom everyone says is adorable, it is not a little chance baby and cannot have either a mind or a heart just like anyone else! May this child be allotted the being which matches its worth. We all three chattered about it at dinner and we opened a bottle of champagne to drink to his health and destiny, and we said all sorts of things which I do not want to repeat in a letter which you will be able to guess.

I have sent Buloz the first part of Maurice's travels, which only deal with his stay in Algiers; it is amusing, but would have no direct interest for you. He is just finishing the second part which will be sent to you before Buloz sees it, but the first part has a little preface by me which Buloz will take or send to you—if he is not ill, as he is continually—which he will only print if you approve of it. If you have any observations to make to me upon it, please write with your usual splendid candour and I shall listen with all my heart.

There is one thing which bothers me a little, when I mention you outside an intimate circle and that is that you are so great a personage. The world is so dirty-minded and so low that few can suppose that one likes a prince for his own sake, and I am forced to speak of you with a reserve which I should never observe with some comrade whom I love a great deal less.

Or if one does brave these contemptible suspicions as in the end one has to when honesty demands it, it looks like doing it out of foolish vanity and proclaimng a friendship which others must envy. You will see whether I do not manage to get past these shoals. A Republican always! but convinced that you would be the best head to any Republic or the *best alternative*

to an incompetent Republic which wanted re-building, I simply laugh at the accusation of treachery which some people do not spare me. But with regard to such a light, laughter-loving work as Maurice's I have no need to make a profession of faith, and untimely as ever, I confine myself to telling you in two words that I am fond of you. Acknowledge this letter by a line, please. I will tell you why. I want to assure myself as to the safety of my letters to you. But that must be written another day.

Good-night, my great friend. Oh my God! What happiness I do wish for you! And how you will love your child, you, who loved your father so much.

Nohant, 25th February, 1862.

Yes, you alone are frank and courageous, in this laboratory for brewing hypocrisy. Do not be discouraged by the outcry; go forward as you always do, dear Prince, and be sure that the real France is marchng with you. She will not forget the frenzies that you have endured for her sake, and your place is already marked in the history of progress like a ray of truth piercing the gloom. All hearts follow you and mine blesses you.

GEORGE SAND.

TO THE COMTESSE D'AGOULT

(After a break of many years in their correspondence)

Nohant, June 7th, 1862.

Thanks for the few words from you, my dear Marie. It is very nice of you to want to complete the happiness of these days for me by adding a memory of you and your congratulations. When one has once really

been fond of a person one never really leaves off caring, even during long years when it seems that the affection is forgotten. I no longer remember very well what happened to part us.

I live in the present always now. And in my heart to-day you will find nothing which could grieve or disturb you.

Thus, I am always yours

GEORGE SAND.

TO PRINCE JEROME

Nohant, 26th July, 1862.

MY DEAR PRINCE,

I am just back from the banks of the Creuse, and I have heard the news of the happy event. You know in advance that I am enchanted.

The princess is a splendid mother to nurse her child herself! You must make a man, a real *man* of that child! I am sure you will be a tender father, because you were such a good son, but do superintend his education *yourself*, and then he will be brought up as a man of the future and not a man of the past.

Your friends are counting on that and they rejoice. I cannot tell you how much I am thinking of you just now and how much I dream over the thought of your son. You must be contented this time! Tell me that you are, and give the child a kiss from me in the name of Almighty God, the King of Kings, with Whom I dwell in peace.

I have no such happiness to relate of ourselves. I am waiting impatiently for *hope*. My children are with my husband at Nerac. He has been seriously ill; but he does not count at all for them now, and my children will come back to me. My affection for you is as constant as ever.

GEORGE SAND.

TO ALEXANDRE DUMAS FILS

Nohant, 14th July, 1863, Evening.

Marc-Antoine Sand[1] was born this morning the anniversary of the taking of the Bastille. He is big and strong and he looked me in the eyes with an attentive and deliberate air when I received him all warm, into my apron. I think we know each other already and he looked as if he wanted to say to me: "Hullo. There you are!" He was dipped into a bath of Bordeaux wine in which he kicked about with marked satisfaction. This evening he has taken the breast voraciously, and his wet-nurse who is no other than his little mother is as gay as a chaffinch. We fired the small cannon and a *pifferari* of Auvergne came to sing him the most primitive of old French songs. The father Maurice wept like a calf, and Calmatta like an oyster at the sight of this sturdy little brat! Everybody is enchanted! Thank you for your kind letter of July 5th. Rejoice with us, my big son, and come and see us soon.

G. SAND.

TO CHARLES PONCY

(whose wife was dead)

Nohant, 27 August, 1863.

Poor children! To have worked and suffered so much for nothing! No, not for nothing! since you sweetened her last days and prolonged the illusion and hope as long as possible. God will remember it and she also in a better world. Poor girl! So gentle and so young still and so beautiful, with charm and natural

[1] Her grandson. Maurice Sand had married Lina, daughter of the engraver Calamatta, the year before.

distinction! How she languished and how she struggled against it. She is better where she is, never doubt it! Wherever it may be her spirit lives and it is with God.

Dear Solange, you must be your father's consolation and he must be yours. We all love you well.

GEORGE SAND.

TO PRINCE JEROME

Nohant, 19 November, 1863.

MY DEAR PRINCE,

You must think I am dead, but you have to rush about so much that you would not have time to read my letters. You have been working so hard for the arts, industry and progress in general. I have been writing a play, which is far less useful and less interesting. What can I tell you which would add to your knowledge, you, who know everything? I have been told that you want to know what I think of Renan's *Vie de Jésus*.

M. Renan has lowered his hero a little in my estimation in one way, and has raised him in another. I liked to persuade myself that Jesus never believed that he was God, nor proclaimed himself the miraculous son of God and that his belief in an avenging and punishing God was an apocryphal addition to the Gospels. At any rate those are the beliefs which I always accepted and even sought, but M. Renan is working from deeper studies and examination, stronger and more competent than mine. There is no need to be as scholarly as he is, to be able to appreciate the truth of his work, and its combination of realities and indisputable appreciations. If only by the colour of the life represented one is penetrated, on reading it, with a stream of clear light illuminating the period,

the surroundings and the man. I think therefore that he has *seen* Jesus better than we, who have only had a glimpse of him before, and I do accept him as Renan gives him. One can no longer see him as philosopher, scholar, or sage, combining in himself the best of the philosophy and science of the day: but his genius is that of a dreamer, an enthusiast, a poet, an inspired fanatic. So be it. Even so I love him still, but now alas! he does not fill so great a place in the world of ideas! It diminishes the importance of his personal work for me! His religion is henceforward far more dependant on the chances and changes of human life, than upon one of those great historical necessities, which one has agreed to call, and is more or less obliged to call, *providential*.

We must accept truth even if it changes our point of view. The worse for him and the better for us, perhaps. His religion (as developed by inferior minds) has done quite as much harm as good, and as (whether it is M. Renan's opinion or not) I am persuaded to-day that in future it can only do harm, I think that M. Renan has written one of the most useful books which could have been written at the moment.

I shall have a great deal to say regarding the artifices of M. Renan's style. One would have to be very brave to complain of such admirably lovely form. But it is too seductive and not precise enough, when it endeavours to draw a veil over the degree and kind of divinity which may be attributed to Jesus. There are streaks of vivid light in the work which prevent an attentive spirit from wandering. But there are also too many charming and rather puerile efforts, to allow the *clairvoyance* of a spirit forewarned, to slumber, or allow the author to save with one hand what he destroys with the other. That comes, not as has often been said, from a remnant of Renan's seminary-education (which his virile mind has not been able to throw off altogether), but from an artist's craze

for his subject. There is danger and perhaps inconvenience in being an erudite philosopher and poet. It certainly is a picturesque combination, and rarely to be found in the same human brain, but in such matters enthusiasm is perilous to logic, or at any rate to the precision of assertions.

Have you read M. Renan's five or six pages in the Revue des Deux Mondes of last month? I like that better than anything else he has written hitherto. It is great, *great!* Of course I think certain detail could be better stated, but it is so great, that I cannot resist it and must admire it greatly. Now I should very much like to have your opinion of that, as you have had mine. You know how to sum up. Please do it for me with your own marvellous conciseness.

I shall go to Paris this winter. I hardly know when. My family are all well. My grandson is a perfect dear and such a good boy. They say that your son is superb: I am longing to see him. My nest here sends you its homage and to the princess as well.

Is it true that there will be war?

One thing is certain and that is that I love you, as ever, with all my heart.

GEORGE SAND.

TO HER NIECE AUGUSTINE

Nohant, 2nd January, 1864.

DEAR CHILD,

It is true that I hardly ever write now because somehow I cannot! but you know quite well that you are never forgotten. I am often ill. I am up and about for a month or two and then I have a relapse. I am in a low state at present and really need change of air and regime, but how am I to get them? I cannot stop working for my earnings pay our way.

But do not let us look on the dark side of things since everybody has serious and inevitable troubles. I am so glad that your poor little girl whom you were so anxious about has at last turned the corner into satisfactory growth and vitality and that George is doing his lessons well. That is immediate happiness, the most actual and important in life. Our lives run tranquilly so long as our Marc is as gay and fresh as a rose. When the inevitable little crises and ailments come along we are able to face them calmly. That is family life, and hitherto ours has been all pleasure and the dear little boy's first tooth did not worry him very much. Lina is a good wet-nurse and stands the strain of it very well.

We are all working like niggers round this cradle. We only took very short holidays and have not spent much time giving plays. We have had a great many people, *too many* always, staying in the house, but as Lina has been so tied by her duty to the baby we have always broken up the festivities early Now we have no one here but Lambert and his wife, who is a very nice, indeed an excellent young woman, but they are going away, one day soon. They send you many kind messages. Maurice had to spend his birthday in bed, but happily it was only an attack of lumbago. He and his wife, who is always so charming and winning, also send you warm greetings.

Thank Bertholdi for the mineralogical specimens which are very fine.

Embrace him for me and Jeanette and Georget too.

G. Sand.

Poor Poland. It is heart-rending. All hearts mourn for her.

TO HER SON MAURICE AND HIS WIFE

Paris, 21 *February*, 1864.

Dear Children,

I thought I had answered your question: *Do I want* to be my Cocoton's godmother? I should think I did! If he were going to be baptised a Catholic[1] I should say: "No, that will only bring ill luck!" But in the case of a free Church it is different and you can be sure of my support.

They are beginning serious work at the Odéon. But they have lost so much time that we shall not be ready before the end of the month and perhaps not until the 2nd or 3rd of March. That is how they reward one, nowadays. But I do not want to worry you with my troubles; they are not light and you would be astonished at the provision of patience which I make for the day every morning.

I went to see Prince Jerome yesterday morning and I asked him to let me see his son; he sent orders that the nurse was to bring him in. The baby was brought in by a little person in a dress of Scotch tweed, whom I did not look at closely at first and then I saw that it was the Princess herself, who was bringing her young man to see me, unattended and so sweetly. It is a fine child, very handsome with a timid, melancholy look. He is more like his mother than his father; a little darling and very obedient. I am well, but have no appetite; one never has in Paris.

Delacroix's sale produced two hundred thousand francs in two days. His slightest sketches sold at two hundred, three hundred and four hundred francs each. So that poor man could command prices like that!

Good-night, my darling children. I hug you tenderly.

[1] Maurice had become a Protestant.

TO MAURICE AND LINA SAND

Paris, Tuesday, 1st March,
1864. 2 *a.m.*

My Children,

I came home with an escort of students, shouting "*Vive George Sand! Vive Mademoiselle La Quintinie! Down with the clerics!*" It was a furious demonstration as well as a stage success such as has never been seen they said at the theatre.

The students were waiting on the Place de l'Odéon from ten o'clock in the morning and all the time the play[1] was going on, a compact crowd of them who had not been able to get places, was filling up the streets adjacent to the rue Racine right up to my door.

Marie had an ovation and madame Fromentin also because she was taken for me in the street. I think all Paris was there to-night. The working-men and the students, furious at having been taken for clericals in About's Gaetana affair, were quite ready for fisticuffs. There were outbursts of stamping and shouting every instant in the auditorium, in spite of the presence of the whole Imperial family. Moreover they all applauded, the Emperor like the rest and he shed tears openly. Princess Mathilde came to shake hands with me in the *foyer*. I was in the directors' box with Prince Jerome and the Princess, Ferri and Madame d'Abrantes. The Prince clapped like thirty hired applauders (le claque) and leaned out of the box and shouted with the rest. Flaubert was also in the box with us and cried like a woman. The actors played very well indeed and were recalled between all the acts.

In the foyer about two hundred people, some of whom I knew and many I did not know, pressed round me to congratulate so much that at last I was

[1] *Le Marquis de Villemer*, based on the novel of the same name.

ready to drop. There was no sign of a counter-demonstration, although many people were ill-disposed to the play. But even people who were innocently blowing their noses were hushed down. It is an event which has put the Quartier Latin into a ferment this morning. All day long I have been receiving students who called on me four at a time with their cards in their hats to ask me for seats and to protest against the clerical party, giving me their names.

I do not know if the success will be as great to-morrow. I am told that it will, and as three or four thousand people have been refused places, it looks as if the public was still numerous and enthusiastic.

TO GUSTAVE FLAUBERT

(The beginning of her friendship and correspondence with Flaubert. She was sixty and Flaubert forty-three)

Paris, 16 *March*, 1864.

DEAR FLAUBERT,

I do not know whether you meant to give or lend me M. Tamé's fine book and being in doubt, I am sending it back to you. I have not had time to read more than part of it here and at Nohant I shall have no time for anything but scribbling for Buloz, but in two months' time when I come back here I will ask you to lend me these splendid volumes with their noble aim and scope once more.

I regret not having seen you to say good-bye, but however as I am coming back soon I hope you will not have forgotten me and will also send me something of your own to read.

You were so kind and sympathetic to me at the first night of *Villemer* that now I not only admire your great talents but feel a whole-hearted affection for you.

GEORGE SAND.

TO CHARLES DUVERNET

Nohant, 24 *March*, 1864.

My Dear Friend,

We are on the move for a while. My children do not want to stay here without me ; they are quite right and I am glad they do not care to. We are all going to stay in some little place near Paris so that we can occupy ourselves with theatrical and other work which is more easily accomplished there than here. We mean to organise the management of Nohant on a basis of real working economy so that we can spend a few months there every year together. That is all. It does not mean departure, nor abandonment of our own territory, nor a family separation, it simply means that we are arranging a more portable or transportable home, for we have plans for travelling next year. It seems to me that you have got hold of the same idea for you do not live at Coudray all the year round. Let us hope that our country holiday-times may coincide and that in consequence you will hardly notice that we have made any change. Have you had any sign of life from Geroult? I wrote to you that I had seen him and that he had promised me what you wish. I never answered your letter of congratulation about *Villemer*. I expected to see you here. I therefore send you my thanks to-day and greetings to all your dear family. Friendly messages from us all.

G. Sand.

TO MADEMOISELLE NANCY FLEURY

Nohant, 8*th May*, 1864.

Dear Friend,

I did not know that little *deceiver* Lina had never answered your letter. She did not boast of it to me ! She is so much taken up with her baby-boy, and she

looks after him so prettily and so capably that one must pardon her for any remissness.

Do not be anxious about us: we are all well and our little uncertainties are all over. My dear children do not want to *manage* Nohant; they are wrong perhaps, in their own interests as they would probably do it more economically than I do. But they have some kind and tender scruples which withhold them. So I am leaving everything to be managed as usual, when I am away, with full facilities for coming back any day and finding Sylvain as controller of accounts, Marie as housekeeper and the garden in good hands. That arranged I am off to Palaiseau; for, though *Villemer* brought in enough to pay off my outstanding debts, it is no guarantee that I shall have an equal success next year, or that I shall be able to live in idleness.

At the moment I am purchasing my future repose by over-working. I have got to write a long novel for Buloz, "at the gallop" so to speak, and as the said Buloz has been very good to me, I must satisfy him dead or alive. That is why I cannot find a moment to write to my friends. I am very well at present. I have been away a few days alone at Gargilesse, where I did my work at night and explored the country by day. It is a Paradise at this season. My children have been obliged to stay where they are for a time owing to their Monsieur Marc, but now he has got most of his teeth and can eat solid food. He will very soon be weaned, after which his parents will take him to the Riviera and to Paris where they want to set up a little place of their own. Personally I think they would be better at Nohant. We shall see. The little boy is charming, gay as a lark and never cross. Au revoir and may we meet soon my good friends. Love each other always. I embrace you tenderly. Lina will make up for her shortcomings by writing a long letter soon.

TO MONSIEUR GUILLEMAT

(Bookseller at La Châtre, a small town near Nohant)

Nohant, 14th June, 1864.

MONSIEUR,

I am deeply touched by the joint letter written in the names of several artisans and shop-keepers of La Châtre[1]; I hope you will express my gratitude to them and tell them that I shall never forget my own dear home-country and the kindly sympathy that I have met with there. It has repaid me for the small persecutions which I have undergone in earlier days, and which I should have been bound to meet anywhere, because humanity does not always understand that it is one big family, and it will take many generations before men understand where their happiness lies.

That happiness is to be found in holy brotherhood and its day will come. Poets cannot doubt it for they live on the expectation of it.

In the meantime we are passing through a period of civilization in which work is ennobled in the opinion of all decent folk, and in which much suffering and fatigue do not deprive man of his independence or his dignity, for he has come to understand his trials.

Many have come to understand! Let us have patience with those who do not. I am not leaving home for long I hope, but whether near or far, please rest assured, gentlemen, that my heart will be with you and that your beautiful letter will remain one of my best memories.

Please accept my thanks with the expression of my sincere devotion.

GEORGE SAND.

[1] To wish her good-bye on the occasion of her departure to live at Palaiseau, near Paris.

TO LINA SAND

Palaiseau, 20 *June*, 1864.

Dear Daughter,

I received your letter of the 26th which corrected my mistake. So your birthday is the 26th not the 27th. At any rate you received my letter and my little present on the 27th. However it does not matter now as it must all have arrived and you know I have not forgotten my Cocote's twenty-second birthday, nor Mauricot's 30th June.

Was poor Cocoton really so ill just when you were going to start? I am afraid that you will all catch cold at Guillery as the rooms are so draughty. I remember the draught which comes under the door, which in my time, was strong enough to blow up one's skirts. Here we are braving the elements in an excellent house, well built with thick walls, as draught-proof and healthy as it can possibly be. But the bad weather is everywhere. We have only seen the sun three times since I came to Palaiseau. Nothing but showers, clouds and a nasty grey sky which would suit autumn, and so cold in the evenings that I have gone back to my winter clothes. It is good weather for walking. We walk at least two miles every evening after dinner. The country is charming, as varied as possible; there are meadows as flat as a carpet, splendid vegetable-gardens stretching away to the horizon with enormous fruit-trees; then there are hills as well, even quite rocky ones, for yesterday evening we had to abandon our attempt to climb. The woods are charming with many plants which I do not recognise, they are so different in size from those at Nohant. The rock-soil is all shattered and twisted with volcanic movement; there are pebbles, clayey chalk, sand-stone, fine sand, and mill-stone, and the sub soil is two metres of vegetable earth as

fine as ashes, fertile as Eldorado and watered by springs at every step. The peasants here are richer than the middle classes with us. They are very kind obliging people and have too much respect for property for the word theft ever to be heard.

After six o'clock in the evening the country is as deserted as the Sahara. Once out of the village we may walk three hours on the hills without meeting one person or an animal. No Parisians, no loiterers, and even on Sundays very few of the townsfolk. The peasants go to bed at sunset, and we have the silence of Gargilesse. In fact, the place pleases me enormously and it is complete isolation, which is very favourable for work, and then I dig a good deal in the garden and feel very well.

Our place is far from realising your dream of grottoes and parks and orange-trees. It is very, very small, but so comfortable and clean, that I ask nothing more. As for you, I can imagine you taking Cocoteau out in his perambulator through the myrtles and the oleanders, and I am anxious to see you here, for I think you would like it and you would have a good climate and a good doctor at hand if necessary.

Tell Bouli (Maurice) that Madame Buloz came to see me yesterday and said: "Bouloz has read Maurice's novel. He thinks it very amusing and well-written and *full of talent*. But he is afraid of it. He says that if a great deal were not suppressed he would risk an action brought against the *Revue de deux Mondes*, as there was against the *Revue de Paris*, on account of *Madame Bovary*."

I replied: "Tell Buloz to read it again and think it over. If it would be possible in the *Revue* with only a few cuts, Maurice has given me *carte blanche* and I will undertake the task, with the intention of publishing it as a serial. But if the corrections and suppressions are so considerable that it would mutilate the book and completely change its character

then it would be better to publish it in book-form straight away."

Madame Buloz went on: "Buloz certainly means to give it up rather than spoil it, and I have not been asked to tell you that he refuses it. Before deciding he wants to read it again and to think it over at leisure. He would much regret refusing it for he praises it highly and thinks it is prodigiously amusing and well-written. He added that in volume-form it might have the success of *Madame Bovary* as the volume-reader is a separare species from the *review-reader*."

If Buloz decided that he cannot publish without spoiling the book, I will ask him to make as good an agreement for Maurice with Michel Lèvy as he can for an octavo edition, instead of it appearing in the Revue; a novel which has not already appeared as a serial is always more welcome, and it would come out in smaller format afterwards.

Maurice should let me act for him and need not worry. His novel has a chance of success and I will do my very best for it. Anyway we have Buloz's good will.

He is very nice about Maurice, and declares that he thinks him very talented. Perhaps he is right about the prudishness of his subscribers, perhaps too, when he has thought it over, he will come to realise, what I have told him already: "A novel of modern manners always shocks when it wounds modern susceptibilities; but we can shock with impunity when we veil the book in historical distance of time, because then it does not impose a new morality upon our own times, and the reader pays scant attention to the people so utterly different from himself."

Upon that good-night, darling. Hug Mauricot and Cocoteau for me, and be very nice and write me long letters.

TO MONSIEUR LUDRE-GABILLAND

(a neighbour at La Bhatre)

Palaiseau, 24 *July*, 1864.

My Friend,

We are broken! We have lost our child![1] I started for Agen with a doctor on Tuesday evening and went on to Guillery without stopping to take breath. But the poor baby had died the evening before. We buried him next day in the tomb of his great-grandfather, beside Solange's first child, who also died at Guillery. A Protestant pastor came from Nerac to perform the ceremony, in the midst of a Catholic population which is quite used to living side by side with Protestantism.

We went back to Agen the same evening, and there my poor children felt a little calmer and were able to take some rest. Yesterday I saw them off at Agen for Nîmes. They feel a need of travelling and I have urged them to it. I had to stand out against their idea of taking the poor little body to Nohant for burial, and really, exhausted as they both are, it would have been enough to kill them. I was able to calm their excitement, and to obtain the results I have just related to you and to see them start resigned and courageous.

In a few weeks they will come and rejoin me here and I hope that they will have turned their thoughts to the future.

I had rushed off leaving a heap of proofs to be corrected and I came back by the express at five o'clock this morning. That was pretty severe for a person of my age. But the physical fatigue and the obligation to be energetic was a great help morally and I was able to help the poor parents. Maurice feels it most. He

[1] Marc Sand died of dysentery at the house of M. Dudevant, Maurice's father.

had been wild to save the child. He nursed him day and night and never closed his eyes. He thought he had saved him and wrote triumphantly to me. But a terrible relapse made all their efforts useless. Well, this will have to be borne like everything else. Do not be anxious about us. The worst is over. It will be a bitter reflection for many a long day. M. Dudevant has been as much affected as he ever can be, and has been very friendly to me about it.

Kiss your dear wife for me. I know that she will weep with us, for she was so good to the dear little boy. Antoine was dining with me at Palaiseau the day I got the telegram giving the alarm. He rushed about with my messages, but in spite of his help and M. Maillard's, I was not able to start that evening. There is no train from Palaiseau to catch the express.

Adieu my good friend, yours with all my heart,

G.S.

TO HER SON MAURICE

Palaiseau, 25 *July*, 1864.

My Children,

I await news of you impatiently. Inevitably I am much broken in spirit and I want to hear that you are settled at Nîmes with our good Boucoiran,[1] and well looked after, if either of you is not well. I bore the journey very well, but am much more tired to-day than yesterday and I am afraid it must be the same with you. When the will has nothing more to perform, one feels the body give way. I have corrected proofs all day. You may judge that I had no head for it. I re-read the same thing over six times without being able to take it in, and it was for that drudgery that I had to leave you so soon ; for the *Revue* office was all upset, and yesterday I received four sets of proofs,

[1] Boucoiran had been Maurice's first tutor.

coming from Nohant, Nerac, etc. Louis Buloz came in to help me finish up. I went for a short walk this evening, but the tears keep coming whether I am walking, or sleeping, or working and half the time I am thinking of nothing in a sort of stupor. Nature must have her way. She always does get it. But do fight down bitterness, my children! Let your grief be gentle and do not raise accusations against God! He has given you one year of happiness and hope. Now He has taken back to Himself, Who is Universal Love, the boon He had given you. He will give it back in some other form. We love and suffer and hope and fear, we are full of joy and terror, in a word we *live*; for life is like that, just a terrible mixture! Let us love and support one another. I send you a thousand kisses. Maillard is looking out for some little place for you near us. Write a friendly line to him and to Camille Leclerc in a few days. Follow this prescription, get up your strength again and put your mind into the right vein for working for the future. Take care of each other both morally and physically. And if you do not feel less weary and indifferent down there, come back here. Write to me about yourselves and about all you are doing, but if you have not got time for details send me just a line to tell me how you are. I need that if I am to feel any better myself.

Do not tear your hearts by writing about our sorrow to our friends. I am letting everybody know, and they will write to you.

TO MONSIEUR LUDRE-GABILLAND

Palaiseau, October, 1864.

Dear Friend,

I answer your letter at once, giving you the advice that Maurice has asked from you. As soon as ever they have got over the great sorrow of returning to

Nohant alone, the best thing the dear children could do is to live there, keeping a pied-a-terre in Paris to go up to when they want to amuse themselves. If they organise their system of domestic economy well they will also be able to make little excursions into Savoy, Auvergne and even Italy. It can all be turned into a very agreeable existence and it should be ; for I would go to see them at Nohant, and we must hope that they would soon have some dear companionship, that of another child. There is no question of it at the moment, but when they are quite calmed down, I hope that they will give us that welcome surprise. Then of course there would necessarily be two years of practically sedentary life for the young wife, and where could she bring up a young family better than at Nohant ?

Of course I can quite see from their state of uncertainty, their demand for comfort, their continual projects which cannot be reconciled with the necessities and expenses of actual life, that they do not know how to organise their lives as they ought to anywhere.

They could live so happily at home by reducing the scale of life at Nohant to moderate proportions, with the allowance I give them, added to the income derived from the place. If my arrangements with the servants do not suit them, they would be at liberty to propose different ones to me next year, and I should be willing to agree to anything they wanted. Let them give it a trial and by next St. John's day they will know what to think about the position. When I am dead they will have, not the daily earnings which accrue to me when I am in good health, but the products of all my works, which will certainly be a substantial addition to their means, and as they will not be obliged to consider the future they will be able to spend their income without any anxiety.

I know that it is a great sorrow to Maurice and a

great loss of something he is accustomed to not to have me on the spot to think of everything *for* him. But it is time for him to take charge of his own life, and it is his wife's duty to *exert her wits*, and take my place. It is with her that he will have to grow old. Does the poor boy think that I shall last as long as he does?

Draw their attention to this point and convince them of it for if I am to die in peace I must see them take the reins and driving the coach themselves. Matters are not satisfactory as they are, for they are not content with them and often make remarks to that effect. I have altered things so far as I could in their interests and I am still ready to modify them even further according to their desires, but only on condition that I am no longer to have the responsibility of trying to realise an ideal condition which cannot be realised in this world.

I rely on your wisdom and also on the clever method dictated by your sensitive heart to calm these two dear people whom you too love as a parent, and to reassure them about my feelings which are always as tender as ever.

Yours with all my heart, dear friend. When are you coming to Paris? Let me know at once if you can, for when all this business is over I want you to come to Palaiseau, and do not want to miss you by crossing *en route*.

Tender greetings to your wife. Write to me about Antoine, to whom I sent heartfelt messages.

TO MONSIEUR NEFFTZER

Palaiseau, 12 *January*, 1865.

It is no doubt a piquant experience to wake up and learn from the newspapers some news of oneself which one has never heard of.

A few days ago I became aware in this manner that I had bought some land and that I was going to build a very curious and original house on it. This dream-fortune which had come to me did not trouble me ; but the construction of the house, thus announced to me, embarrassed me a good deal. I am not an architect and I have nothing to do with building. Also rubbing my eyes I felt glad that I had no capital at my disposal, and that I was not obliged to keep the promises of the newspaper to its subscribers.

It has also been announced in several newspapers that I was going to construct a play for the Odéon out of my novel *Valvèdre*, which is something I have never had the least idea of. And now the *Temps* will send a lot of visitors to my door in vain, by having announced that I am coming to Paris.

It would seem that the object of our moving to Paris is to attend the rehearsals of a play that my son has presented to the Odéon !

Since none of these bulletins are mischievous in any way, I hope that the editors will not mind my bringing home to them that such proceedings may bring embarrassing complications into people's lives, and may force them to write a lot of useless letters to their mystified friends and acquaintances.

I therefore demand kindly corrections on all hands. I have not won a prize in a lottery. I am not going to build anything. I am writing a play of which the title is not yet settled, and of which the subject is not drawn from *Valvèdere*. My son has not written a play for the Odéon and when there are rehearsals of his plays he will attend to them himself. Finally I am not in Paris and there is absolutely nothing in my life which offers the slightest interest of novelty or curiosity to the Parisian public.

TO FLAUBERT

Paris, 10 *August*, 1866.

First of all, please embrace your dear mother and your charming niece for me. I was really touched by the welcome I received in your monastic dwelling, where a stray animal of my description is an anomaly which may well be considered in the way.

Instead of that I was received like one of the family, and I could see that the perfect manners displayed came from the heart. Do not forget my messages to my very kind friends. I was really very happy amongst you all. And then you yourself are such a gallant youth, man of forty as you are, and I love you with all my heart. At the moment, my head is full of Rouen and ancient monuments and picturesque houses. Seen in your company it was all doubly striking to me, but your house and garden, your *fortress*, were like a dream and I feel that I am still there.

When I was crossing the bridges yesterday, Paris looked small and dainty to me. Oh! I want to be going away again. I did not see enough of you and your surroundings, . . . but now I must break off to run to the children who are shouting for me until they are ready to gnash their teeth! Greetings and blessings to you all.

G. Sand.

TO FLAUBERT

Paris, 12 *August*, 1866.

I have not yet read my play. I still have something to do to it. There is no hurry. Bouilhot's play is going tremendously well, and I am told that my friend Cadol's will come next. Now I would not trample

over that young man's prospects for anything in the world. My play's production is put off some time you see, but I do not mind, and it will not damage me in the least. Oh! the style of that last sentence. Fortunately it was not written for Buloz. I saw your friend, yesterday evening in the green-room of the Odéon. I shook hands with him. He looks a happy man. Then I had a little conversation with Duquesne about your fairy.[1] He is very anxious to become acquainted with her and whenever you feel disposed to show him the thing, you will be received with open arms.

To-morrow or the next day Mario Proth will give me news as to the re-organisation of the journal. To-morrow I shall go out to buy your dear mother's shoes, and the week after when I go to the Palaiseau I shall look out my book on porcelain. If I have forgotten anything else I was asked to do, please remind me of it.

I am going to answer all your questions, straight off, just as you answered mine.

It is such a relief, is it not, to be able to discuss one's life freely? Our lives are a great deal less complicated than the *bourgeoisie* suppose, and the mysteries that one reveals to a friend, are just the contrary of those imputed to us by the indifferent.

I was very happy during that week with you. There were no cares, I was in a cosy nest, surrounded by lovely country and affectionate hearts, and I had your beautiful candid face which has an almost paternal expression to look at. Age has no meaning for you and one feels a sense of protection in your infinite kindness, and one evening when you called your mother "my girl," tears rose irrepressibly to my eyes. It was an effort for me to go away, but I was hindering you in your work . . . and then . . . and then . . . a weakness of my getting older is the fact

[1] This is a reference to a play Flaubert was writing.

that I canot stay long in one place. I am afraid of getting too fond of it and of wearying people, for the old should be extraordinarily discreet. From a distance I may tell you how fond of you I am, without fear of bathos. You are one of the *rare* ones, who has remained impressionable and sincere with a passion for art, not corrupted by ambition and not intoxicated by success. Indeed you will always be about twenty-five years old, because you still hold all sorts of ideas which are falling into disuse, or so say the senile young men of the present day. Of course, I believe it is only a pose with them, but how stupid it is! If it is lack of virility it is even worse, for then they are only *men of letters*, not *men*. All success to your novel. It is exquisite; but it is strange to me to discover that there is a whole side to you which does not declare itself and does not appear in what you do, you are probably ignorant of it yourself. I am sure it will develop later.

Tender greetings to yourself, your mother and the charming niece. Oh! I forgot. I saw Conture this evening and he told me that to oblige you, he would do your portrait in crayon, as he did mine, and for any price that you liked to fix. You see that I am a good commission agent, so you must employ me again.

TO FLAUBERT

Nohant, 21 Sept. 1866.

I have just been away for a few days' scamper with my children and I found your two letters when I arrived, which, added to the joy of finding Mademoiselle Aurore,[1] fresh and beautiful, makes me quite happy. And you my dear Benedictine are working away alone in your fascinating monastery as usual, never appearing outside. That is what it is to have been out and

[1] The baby daughter of Maurice and Lina Sand.

about too much. You do not think it worth going anywhere unless it is to Syria, or a desert, or the Asphalite lakes, with plenty of dangers and fatigues thrown in! And yet you can write a *Madame Bovary* in which all the tiny corners of life are studied and depicted by a great master. And what a strange master to be able to imagine and describe a combat between Chimera and the Sphinx as well. You are a being quite apart, very mysterious, and mild as a sheep in spite of all the rest. I had a great desire to question you, but my overwheiming respect for you withheld me from it; for I can only play lightly with my own disasters, and those which a great mind must have undergone to be in the highest state of production seem to me to be sacred things which cannot be touched either roughly or lightly.

Saint-Beuve, who however likes you very much, will maintain that you are appallingly vicious. But perhaps he looks at you with rather dingy dirty eyes, like that botanical scholar who asserts that germander is a *dirty* yellow. The observation was so false that I could not restrain myself from writing in the margin of the book, "*It is you who have dirty eyes!*"

My presumption is that an intelligent person has intellectual curiosity about everything. I have not had the courage to go quite that length. I prefer to leave my mind incomplete; that is my own business, but everyone is free either to embark on a large ship with all sails spread, or in a cockle-shell. The artist is an explorer who should stop at nothing, and in wandering right and left out of the road, he is doing neither good not evil; his aim sanctifies it all. It is for him to find out by experience, what conditions make for the health of his soul. I think that yours is in a state of grace, since you find all your pleasure in work, and do not mind being alone in spite of the rain. Do you know that while there are floods everywhere else we have had beautiful sunshine in Brittany except

for a few showers. There was wind enough to blow the horns off the cattle on the coast, but how splendid a rough sea can be! and how I adore the botany of sea-weeds, and what a passion Maurice and his wife have for shells! We endured any hardships cheerfully, and Brittany always has been a famous see-saw of ups and downs. However we did get rather too much of *dolmens* and *menhirs* and we came across a fête where the peasants were wearing all the costumes which are supposed to have died out, but they are still worn by the old people. Well! these men out of the past, really look rather ugly with their canvas trousers and long hair, and their waistcoats with pockets under the arms, and their debased look, half drunkard and half-bigot. The Celtic ruins which undoubtedly have interest for the archæologist have none for the artist; they are badly set and badly composed. Carnac and Erdven cannot be said to have any physiognomy. In short I shall not leave my bones in Brittany. I prefer your substantial Normandy a thousand times, or in the old days when the trumpet-blast heralded a drama, I should have preferred the lands of real horror and despair. There is no drama to be found where priests reign nowadays, where the breath of Catholic vandalsm has passed by, rasing the monuments of antiquity to the ground and sowing the weeds of the future.

When speaking of the *fairy* you always say *we*; I do not know who you collaborated with, but I always decide to myself that it ought really to go to the Odeon. If I had read the play I should be able to rouse the directors' enthusiasm for you, which is a thing one never can do for oneself. Anything written by you must be too original to be comprehensible to an old buffer like Dumaine. So do order a copy to be sent to you and next month I will come and spend a day with you so that you may read it to me. Croisset is really quite near Palaiseau! and I am passing through a phase of tranquil activity in

which I should much like to see your great river flowing slowly by, and to dream in your orchard, which is so peaceful itself on the top of cliff. But I am chattering and you are in the middle of your work. You must forgive this abnormal intemperance in one who has been gazing at *stones* in Brittany and has not even set eyes on a pen for a fortnight.

This letter is my first visit to the living, on emerging from the complete burial of my poor *ego*. Long may you flourish! That is my *oremus* and my benediction. I embrace you with all my heart.

G. SAND.

TO FLAUBERT

Nohant, 28th September, 1866.

Dear comrade and good friend, it is settled. I will do my very best to be in Paris for the first performance of your friend's play and will do my brotherly duty as always; after which we will go back to your home and I will stay a week, but only on condition that you do not turn out of your bedroom. I hate to disturb anyone and I do not need so many "Chinamen" round me to make me fall asleep. I can sleep anywhere, among the ashes, or on a kitchen-bench like a farm-yard dog. Everything is shining with cleanliness in your house so that one feels comfortable in every corner of it. I will do any wrangling that your mother feels inclined for, and you and I will chatter to our hearts' content. If it is fine I shall force you to come for walks. If it rains we will cook marrow-bones and tell each other the sorrows of our hearts. The great river will flow on grey and black beneath the windows, murmuring all the time: "Quick! Quick!" carrying away our thoughts, and our days and our nights, without ever stopping to look at such poor things as we are.

I have packed up and sent off by luggage-train a good print of Conture's drawing. It is the best portrait I ever had done. I could not lay my hand on it until I found it here. I have added a photograph of a drawing by Marchal, which has once been a good likeness; but every year one changes. Advancing age keeps changing the faces of people who *think*, and that is why their portraits do not resemble them long. I dream so much and live so little that sometimes I feel only three years old. But the next day if my reverie has been a black one, I may feel three hundred! Do you not find the same thing? Do you not feel at moments that you are *beginning* life without an idea what it is, and at other times do you not feel the weight of thousands of centuries upon you, ages of which you have vague memories and painful impressions. Whence do we come and where are we going? *Anything is possible since nothing is known.* Kiss that dear pretty mother of yours for me. It is a perfect joy for me to be with you two. Do try to find that book on Celtic stones as it would interest me very much. Had they opened up the *galgal* of Lockmariaker and the *dolmen* near Plouharnel when you were there? The ancients must have been able to write, as there are stones covered with hieroglyphics and they were certainly skilful gold-workers as very well made torques have been found. My children, who share my great admiration for you, send you greetings and I send you a kiss on the forehead because I know Saint-Beuve lied about you.

GEORGE SAND.

TO FLAUBERT

Paris, 10th November, 1866.

On arriving in Paris I heard some sad news. Yesterday evening while we were talking together—and I think we spoke of him only the day before

yesterday—my friend Charles Duveyrier passed out of this life, one of the tenderest of hearts and simplest of men. He is to be buried to-morrow! He was one year older than I am. One by one, my generation is slipping away. Shall I survive it? I do not wish to very ardently, above all because of these days of mourning and farewell. It is as God wills, on condition that He permits me to love always, in this life, and the next.

I keep alive a very tender feeling for the dead. But one loves the living differently. I will give you the share of my heart that he held, which, added to that which you have already, makes a large portion for you. It is some consolation to make you this present. As regards his literary work he was not a man of the first order; he was popular because of his kindness and his spontaneity. If he had been less occupied with business and with philosophy, his talent would have been a charming one. He leaves a delightful play: *Michel Perrin*.

I was alone for half my journey, thinking of you and your mother at Croisset and gazing at the Seine which thanks to you has become a friendly "divinity" to me. After that I had the society of one man and two women, of a loud, false stupidity which jarred on one like certain pantomime music which is now out of date. Example: "I have been looking at the sun and it has left two dazzling spots in my eyes!"

The husband: "They are called luminous specks." And so on without relief for a whole hour. I am going to bed quite broken-hearted. I have been crying my heart out all the evening and I embrace you all the more warmly, my dear friend. Be fonder of me than before, because I am in trouble.

TO CHARLES PONCY

Paris, 16 *November*, 1866.

My dear children, I am in Paris for a few days. I have returned from Normandy for the second time. Before that, I was in Brittany with Maurice and his wife, and then went to Nohant. To-morrow I am going to Palaiseau, and returning to Paris and then going back to Nohant.

Have I not become a skimming swallow? I stop nowhere and I work everywhere. Since cruel destiny made me quite independent I can take advantage of its only compensation, the freedom of rushing about just as I please of which I was so long deprived. One must shake off sorrow which is the inevitable enemy of well-being. That sounds like one of Palisse's sayings. No! but really one can be happy through oneself alone if one knows how to do it, with simple tastes, a certain courage, a certain power of abnegation, love of work, and above all a good conscience.

Thus happiness is no chimera. I am sure of it now. By means of experience and due reflection one can get so much out of oneself, one can even rebuild one's health by willing it, with force and patience. But implacable death and the sorrows of others which are often incurable in spite of all our efforts, recall to us that we are inter-dependent and that happiness is perpetually at grips with sorrow; one must never be allowed to destroy the other. The happiness which we know how to get for ourselves might make us sterile and egoistic. The sorrow which would prevent our inner wisdom from reacting would make us bitter and cowardly. Let us therefore live life as it is without ingratitude and without lasting or assured happiness. We cannot change it, so let us accept it.

Well, so for the moment you are in better health and also you are uncertain when you will be able to

start. Always let me know at least a fortnight before, for you see, I am never long in one place now. As long as I have the health for it, I shall go on *fleeing*! Fleeing from what? Perhaps I should answer that at my age one does not want too much fixed contemplation of the solemnity of truth under the same ambient ray.

But instead of discussing the passing events of life I am reading you a lecture in philosophy probably very much opposed to your present state of mind. You are wishing, and yet not wishing, to get your Solange married. She does not wish it herself. She is like Maurice who was so happy with me that he feared he could never be happy otherwise. I had to heckle him about it for he was really "getting on." Now he is very glad that he overcame his apprehension. However a woman ought not to wait so long that Nature becomes annoyed for Nature will tyrannise one day or another! Give my greetings to all the good friends who remember me and kiss your dear daughters for me. All is well at Nohant. Aurore is getting charming. They write to me every day.

I am counting on your sending your works and I am so glad about the publication.

Success and every blessing to you, my dear child.

TO FLAUBERT

Palaiseau, 30 November, 1866.

There is a great deal to say on that subject, my dear comrade. *Cascaret*, that is to say the fiancé in question, is keeping himself for his fiancée. She said, "Let us wait until you have worked out certain problems of your career." So he fell to work. She also said, "Let us keep chaste for one another." So he is keeping himself. It is not Catholic spiritualism which is

stifling him, but he had a great ideal of love, and why should one advise him to throw it away when he makes it a matter of conscience to preserve it.

There is a certain equilibrium which Nature, our sovereign has established in our instincts, and she soon puts a limit on our appetites. Great natures are not necessarily the most robust. We are not developed in every direction by a logical education. We are compressed in every way and we send out shoots and branches where and how we can. Also great artists are often delicate and some have been impotent. Others have exhausted themselves quickly by the violence of their desires. In general I think we may say that we brain-workers feel our joys and our troubles too intensely. The peasant who carries through his heavy task night and day with the earth and with his wife, has not a powerful nature. His brain is of the feeblest. Develop oneself in every direction you say? Come now, not all at once and without any rest! Anyone who boasts of it is chaffing a little, or if he really carries on all his activities at once, they must all fail. If for such people love is a little pot-boiler, and art a little means of livelihood, all very well, but if they are able to know immense joy which touches the infinite, and ardent work which borders upon frenzy, they do not alternate them like waking and sleeping.

Personally I do not believe in those Don Juans who are Byrons at the same time. Don Juan did not write poems and Byron according to all accounts was not successful at love-making. He must at times (one can count those moments on the fingers of one hand) have known complete ecstasy of the heart, soul and senses; he knew enough of it to be a love-poet. For the vibration of our heart strings we do not need more. The perpetual friction of little appetites would break them. Try some day to write a novel in which a real artist is the hero, you will see how gigantic is the flow

of sap in any such tree. But how delicate and reserved the power! You will see how he will look upon everything with an attentive eye, curious and tranquil, and how rare and serious are his passions for the things which he examines and penetrates. You will also see how he fears himself, how he knows that he cannot give himself away without annihilating himself, and how a profound modesty which constrains him to hide the treasures of his soul prevents him from spreading them about and wasting them. The artist is such a fine type that I have never dared to try my hand at a true artist, I did not feel worthy to touch so beautiful and complex a figure; it is too high a flight for just a woman, but the subject might tempt you one day and it would be well worth your while. Where would you find the model? I do not know and I have never really known an artist to the bottom who did not show some mote in the sunbeam, some side of himself which was too nearly approached to the *épicier*. Perhaps you yourself have no mote, so you might depict yourself. I have it all right. I like classifications, I am inclined to be a pedagogue. I like sewing and looking after the children—in that I incline to the nursemaid. I like idle amusements, and in that I incline to be just like any other idiot. And finally I do not really like perfection. I know that, and so I am powerless to portray it. But one might give the artist-hero some faults. What faults? We will talk that over some day together. It is not your type of subject, and I ought not to lead you out of your path. Do be less cruel to yourself. Go ahead and when the divine breath has created for you, you can go over the whole thing and eliminate anything which should not appear in the foreground. Can you not work like that? I think you could. All your work appears to proceed easily from plenitude and abundance. There is a perpetual overflow of it, so that I cannot understand your anguish.

Good-night, dear brother. Tender greetings to your family. I have come back to my solitude at Palaiseau. I love it. I am going back to Paris on Monday. A hearty kiss for you. Work well.

TO FLAUBERT

Paris, 9 January, 1867.

Dear Comrade,

Your old troubadour[1] was tempted to form one of the *claque*. He is still in Paris. He ought to have left on the 25th December, his trunk was strapped up, your first letter to him never got further than Nohant. Now at last he is ready to start and he is going off to-morrow morning with his son Alexander[2] who is willing to accompany him.

It is such a stupid feeling to be laid low and to be practically unconscious for three days and then to get up as weak as if one had accomplished something difficult and useful. All told it was nothing but sheer impossibility of directing anything whatever for the time being. A chill, or weakness or overwork, I really do not know which. I have almost forgotten all about it. You must have heard that Saint-Beuve's condition gives more and more cause for uneasiness. He is rather better, but there is a serious infirmity and besides that, accidents are to be dreaded. I am sad and anxious about it.

I have not been working for more than a fortnight and so my task has not advanced and as I do not know whether I shall be in working trim just yet I have thrown over the Odéon temporarily. They will take my work when I am ready. I am thinking of going to the South for a while when I have seen my children. My head is full of the shore-plants down there. I am

[1] A name for herself.
[2] She often referred to Dumas Fils as her "son."

prodigiously out of love with anything outside my little ideal of peaceful work, country life and pure tender friendship. I do not feel as if I should live long, though I am quite myself again in health. I draw this conclusion from the *great stillness*, which grows more and more still, in my soul which used to be so tempestuous. My brain only works from synthesis to analysis now; formerly it was just the contrary. Now when I rouse myself my mind's eye embraces the whole planet and I have some difficulty in finding the *ego* which used to absorb most of my attention and I begin to think of it as *you* in the plural. This planet is a charming place, very interesting and curious, but not a little behindhand still and not very easy to reform. I hope to pass on to some oasis beyond which will be better calculated for the convenience of all. One needs so much money, so much property, for journeying through this world, and the time spent in earning necessities is all lost from one's little space for study and contemplation. It seems to me that something is due to me which shall be less complicated and less civilized, something more naturally luxurious, something more easily productive of happiness than this life. Will you too come into the world of my dreams if I could succeed in finding the way there. Ah! Who knows?

And how is your novel going? Courage not failing? Solitude not weighing on you? I cannot help thinking that your solitude is not absolute, and that some charming woman companion comes and goes in your life,[1] or perhaps she lives near you? But all the same you do live very much like an anchorite and I envy you your situation. At Palaiseau I am too much alone with the memory of one who is dead; at Nohant I am not sufficiently alone with the children whom I love too much to cling on to them;—and in

[1] This was a good guess, for as a matter of fact Louise Colet was the mistress of Flaubert for some years. He never permitted her to come to Rouen and absolutely refused to marry her.

Paris one does not know what one really is, one forgets oneself in a thousand things which are not worth any more than oneself. I embrace you with all my heart, dear friend, remember me to your mother and dear family and write to me at Nohant for that will do me good. The cheeses? I seem to have heard something about them. I will write about it from there.

TO ARMAND BARBÈS

Nohant, 15 *January*, 1867.

Dear Friend of My Heart,

Your good long letter filled me to the brim with joy and gratefulness. I only read it two days ago because it was waiting for me here at Nohant and I was very unwell in Paris, packing every day and then obliged to go back to bed again. I am better, but for the last few years I have been fighting a tendency to anæmia; I had too much exhausting fatigue and sorrow at an age when one especially needs a quiet life. However the fact is that each summer sets me up and if every winter lays me low again, I suppose I ought not to complain too much.

Like you, I am not anxious to die. Certain that one's life does not end, and is not even suspended, that everything flows on, I go straight on myself with the most complete confidence in the unknown. Henceforward I mean to abstain from trying to understand or define it; I see a great peril in those efforts of imagination which render us systematic, intolerant and *closed* against progress which blows as it listeth always and for ever from the four cardinal points of the horizon. But I have a notion of the incessant and eternal process of *becoming* and whatever form it may take it is demonstrated to me within, by an unconquerable feeling that it is logical and therefore beautiful and good. That is enough to make one live in the love of good and in relative calm, in the fatally

restricted dose of temporary serenity which union with the universal forces and our fellow-beings allows us.

My little working philosophy has become excessively modest, nowadays.

I should like to get you to read my last novel and the last but one. *Le Dernier Amour* is the sequel to *M. Sylvestre*. They are rather artless, not to say foolish, but there are true things in them which have been well-felt and I think you would not dislike them.

A page of it from time to time would have the effect of an innocent drug which lightens the burden of ennui and pain. If you have not got my little volumes at hand I will have them sent to you. They will put you in communication, if not communion with your old friend.

If I write about myself it is in view of our common ideal, of the inner dream which sustains us and filled you with strength and serenity when a sentence of coming death stared you in the face. Now you are sentenced to life, dear friend, to a life of langour, frustration and suffering in which your stoical soul nevertheless keeps expanding and vibrates to the breath of every patriotic emotion.

I am so touched when I recognise that you have remained a *chauvin* as our witty young men in Paris call it, that is to say, a warrior and knight—just as I have remained a *troubadour*, that is a believer in love and art and the ideal, and I will sing their praises to the end, against a world which hoots and jeers. You and I are the young enthusiasts of this generation. Those who come after us have taken age, disillusionment and scepticism upon themselves in our place. That alas! gives only too much food for your dread for the future. This is what a great friend of mine, Gustave Flaubert, has written to me, he, himself having remained a boy at forty-six.

"Yes, indeed, I should like to accompany you to another planet. *Money* will render this one uninhabitable in the near future. It will be impossible even for the richest to exist without constant preoccupation with his property. Everyone will have to spend several hours a day speculating with his capital; it will be delightful indeed."

The fact is that side by side with a political position which is loaded with catastrophe, there is a social economy which is heavy with death-dealing apoplexy. Everything which you foresaw from the Anglo-Saxon contagion will come to pass. That is the cloud no bigger than a man's hand which already is lowering over our whole horizon; Prussia is no more than a speck which perhaps will never burst. Sterility of hearts and minds is far more to be dreaded than a lack of fire-arms, of soldiers and of the spirit of emulation at a given moment. We must I suppose pass through a dim shadowy era in which our great memory—that of the glorious Revolution and of all those great days which left a flame burning in our souls—will disappear like the rest.

But what matter, if it *must* be, friend? By reason of our eternal being we cannot doubt of the revival of the ideal in humanity. Deceived and trapped through so many ages, man hopes to save himself by the so-called experimental method. He sees but one side of the truth and he is bound to try that. It is right. He has a right to mutilate himself. When he has sufficiently experimented by this method he will see that nothing is yet to be accomplished in that way and France eclipsed will become a land of prodigies again —only a question of time!

"We shall not be there," say the weak ones; "life is short and ours has been spent in dread and in tears."

Let us tell them that life is not short but eternal, and that the strong will always be where they are required.

Do tell me what are the works on Joan of Arc which have given you a sense of certainty as to her personal ideas. The only serious matter that I have read on the subject is written by Henri Martin in his *Histoire de France*. Anything else that I have come across has been too legendary and I cannot discover any reality in it, one almost comes to doubt that she ever existed. Her alleged re-apparition after death makes her story resemble the story of Jesus—who did not exist either in the *personalised* way in which he is represented.

I have a certain coolness for the ecstatic, I must confess. I am so devoted to natural history, I find the permanent miracle of life so beautifully and completely demonstrated in nature, that the miracles of hallucination and of personal intervention seem rather small and even *impious* to me.

Dear friend, I thank you so much for your solicitude. All goes well round me. Maurice is as fond of you as ever; he is very well married and his little wife is charming. Both are very active and energetic. Little Aurore is a Cupid whom one can only adore.

She was one year old on the day I arrived here last week. I am *staying with them* now as I have given up all the management of the little property to them and I am thankful to be rid of the bother of it, I have more time to myself and more liberty. I hope to recover very soon and if I do not, at least I am well nursed and cared for. So all is for the best. You must hope on as well. Why do you not recover? If you wished it hard enough, who knows whether you could? And then everyone is so fond of you! That may bring about one of those miracles of *nature* which are God's.

Yours with all my soul.

G. Sand.

TO HENRY HARRIS

(An American friend in Paris)

Thank you for your delightful letter, my dear American. All the details that you give are good, above all, that Sainte-Beuve is better; that causes me real joy. I am engaged in fighting the anæmia which constantly threatens me and I cannot even dream of brain-work at present. I work in the kitchen garden every day or I sew at curtains and counterpanes and it all makes me feel that I am installed in a little room even smaller and cosier than the one I work in. I am doing a piece of embroidery on pale blue, strewn with white medallions where little mythological figures are dancing. I feel that these faint tones and the rococco subjects are appropriate to a condition of anæmia and will only give me simple gentle thoughts which are what I need, at present.

The splendid lusty peasant of Berri is a thing gone by now, and that pretty old dance the *bourrée* is replaced by stupid country-dances; our folk-songs of this district once so admirable, which roused the enthusiasm of Chopin and Pauline Garcia are taking a back seat in favour of the *Femme au Barbe*. Well-made roads are beginning to replace the winding paths where one could get lost, tracts of almost virgin forest which we knew of, have disappeared and the woodland plants have gone to the devil.

To revive the romance of Berri! No! I never promised you that. It would be to re-traverse the road of regrets and really at my age one must combat any tendency so natural and so well-founded. One must live in the future, that is the motto of our country and however much it may cost me to shake off my memories I do not wish to underrate what the future may bring. Nor do I wish to be ungrateful to old age, which has its own advantages

and is full of indulgence, and patience and enlightenment.

If all my energy were restored to me I should not know what to do with it, no longer being duped by myself. I should like to see Italy again because it would be a new Italy. Shall I ever get the strength to go back there? It is not certain, but I do not mean to worry over it. If I had come to my last glimmer of daylight I should tell myself that I had had enough of acting as turn-spit, and that life eternal is a voyage which promises quite enough emotion and astonishment for anyone.

Do ask Paul de Saint-Victor to send me his book.[1] His is a real talent if you like. When I read those masterpieces hurled into a feuilleton, every morning like pearls for the brutal consummation of swine, I was always wondering why they were not collected and published. I am curious to see whether I should experience the same emotion from them in that form as they gave me in detail.

No, Theo (Théophile Gautier) will never be elected to the Académie. He does not want to take the necessary steps, or if he did resign himself to it, he would do it with a bad grace. He does not make any bones about saying what he thinks about old fetishes! I shall be much surprised if I am mistaken in this matter!

But you say nothing of yourself. Have you decided to leave France for a time? No, surely! It seems impossible to me. I feel that France has need of all her lovers, her legitimate owners misunderstand her and tyrannise over her. Stay with us and help us to remain French or to become French men and women once more.

Do not forget that you promised to come and see me here. Our old house is really a curious corner of the world where during the last thirty years we *have*

[1] *Hommes et Dieux.*

succeeded in living out of the bonds of all convention, and in living an artist's life for our own delight, without affording a spectacle for the world. My children would receive you like a friend.

Good-night. This letter has tired me, but I am yours with all my heart.

GEORGE SAND.

TO FLAUBERT

Nohant, 6th February, 1867.

Well, I am much better, at least I am more than half-recovered. The country air has revived me or patience or that *other being* within who wants to work and create something. What was my malady? Oh! nothing really. Quite good organic health, but there was a condition called anæmia, of which the cause is always difficult to ascertain which had been threatening for several years and fell upon me at Palaiseau after my return from Croisset. Loss of weight which was too rapid to be natural, pulse too slow and too feeble, a lazy and capricious digestion with feelings of suffocation and a desire to remain inert. There were days when I could not keep down a glass of water and that made me very low so I doubted the possibility of recovering, but it is all mending and I have been working again since yesterday.

I hear that you, dear, have been taking walks in the snow at night. That was rather a mad way of taking even an exceptional outing and might quite possibly have made you very ill. It is not moonshine but sunshine that I should advise for you! Here we have just had three days of spring. I will wager that you have not once been up to my dear orchard which is so sweet. I love it dearly. If only in memory of me you ought to climb up there every fine day about noon.

Your work would go better afterwards and you would make up for lost time.

So you too have money-troubles? I do not know what they are since I gave up my property to my children. I live from day to day, from hand to mouth like the proletariat; when I can no longer earn my daily bread I will get myself packed up for the next world, and then I shall have no need of anything. But you must live! And how can you live by your pen if you always allow yourself to be duped and fleeced? Do not ask me to tell you how to defend yourself! But have you no business-like friend who would act for you? Yes, you are quite right: the world will go to the devil in the end solely on the money question. I was putting your views on this subject before a dear friend only the other day, telling him that most artists simply curse the necessity of attending to the material side of life. I sent him a quotation from the last part of your letter. You will find out that you have an unsuspected friend in him, whose signature will surprise you!

No, I am not going to Cannes in spite of strong temptation. Just think, only yesterday I received a box of flowers fresh-cut from the flower-fields there, which had been travelling for five or six days for the box was sent to me in Paris and forwarded to Palaiseauu . . . and the flowers are still adorably fresh with a lovely scent. Ah! how I should like to start . . . to start at once for the land of the sun. But I cannot afford it at present and also I have no time. My work has been delayed by illness. So I shall stay where I am. Am I not very well-off here at Nohant? If I cannot get up to Paris next month will you not come here and see me? Yes, it is an eight hours' journey, but you must see my old nest. You owe me a week, or I shall think I am lavishing my friendship upon an ungrateful creature who does not return it.

Poor Sainte-Beuve. He is more unfortunate than we are, for he has had no great griefs and now he has no more material cares. And now he is weeping over the least regrettable and least serious thing in life as he understands life. And then having been a Jansenist he is very haughty so his heart has frozen in that direction. His intelligence is perhaps all the more developed, but that does not suffice, we cannot live on intelligence and neither does it teach us to die. Barbés, who has been expecting every moment to be carried off by a heart-attack, for a long time now, is perfectly good-tempered and cheerful. He does not feel and neither do his friends feel that he will be separated from us by death. The man who feels that he is leaving us for good is the man who feels that his life is really ending, the man who does not hold out his hand to anyone in the hope of being followed and rejoined.

Good-night, dear friend of my heart. They are ringing up the curtain. Maurice is giving us an entertainment with marionettes this evening. It is very amusing and our theatre is so pretty; a regular little jewel of a place. Why are you not here? It is foolish not to live next door to those we love.

GEORGE SAND.

TO LOUIS VIARDOT

(Living at Baden. Husband of the singer Pauline Viardot-Garcia)

Nohant, 11 *April*, 1867.

However it has come about, here I am better and feeling very tranquil at Nohant where I have spent the whole winter. Maurice is very happily settled; he has a perfect little treasure of a wife, energetic, steady, a good mother and a good housekeeper, while she is

essentially an artist in mind and heart. There is only one child, a little girl of fifteen months, who is called Aurore and gives promise of much intelligence and power of observation. The sweet little creature seems to do her best to console us for the loss of the dear little boy who is gone. Maurice has become a great student, naturalist, geologist, and a novelist quite above the average. I have not been working much this winter, as I have been thrown off my usual lines.

This bulletin is in answer to yours. Why on earth have you quarrelled with Paris so badly? Has the Exhibition no attractions for my *fifille*[1] and is not France worth re-discovering if only to pick up the threads of one's own life there again and to watch it transform itself? The exterior is not beautiful. We are going through a phase of impudence in manners combined with hypocrisy in ideas. But one hears that great things are being accomplished under the surface, in economic and philosophic schools of thoughts, whence a new socialism and a new system of politics will emerge. We must live in hopes of that; for the classes who come into prominence and perform all the surface movement, are terribly rotten and one is astonished to find oneself younger and simpler at sixty than the so-called youth and virility of the day. What shall we not have to say to each other on that subject? But you can guess what it is like, and were it not that I regret your desertion of your friends I heartily approve of your retirement into family life, last and only refuge for the liberty of one's soul.

I kiss my *fifille* and shall cherish the thought of her eternally, and all three of us, join in sending you two and your dear children, the best greetings of our hearts.

GEORGE SAND.

[1] Pauline Viardot-Garcia, to whom George Sand was devoted.

TO FLAUBERT

Nohant, 9th May, 1867.

DEAR FRIEND,

I am well, I am at work and I am finishing *Cadio*. It is hot weather and I am living through a calm sad existence, though I cannot explain this peaceful sorrow. This quiet gentle uneventful life weakens me morally, I suppose, while fortifying me physically and I fall into melancholy stupors amid honey-scents and roses which are none the less stupors of melancholy. I have a feeling that everyone I love is forgetting me and that there is justice in their oblivion since I am living as an egoist and doing nothing for them.

I have lived through overwhelming devotions to others which have crushed me, they were beyond my strength and at times I came to cursing them. And now it seems that having no more need of squandering my strength I am wearying of well-being. Whether the human race be in a bad state or a good one, we are bound to attach ourselves to some general interest or to live by an idea, by some illusion, or by some real bit of wisdom. But you have a very shrewd idea of the attitude of modern minds, you who rage so furiously against the timid. The evil may be dissipated you say, but it will gather again to-morrow ; what can one think of a society which will paralyse itself at the height of its expansion because it fears that to-morrow will bring a storm? Never has the idea of danger been so powerful to demoralise as to-day. Are we so much collapsed that we must be begged to eat with the assurance that we shall be able to digest our food all right? Yes, it is stupid! It is shameful! Is it the result of comfort and is civilisation going to drive us into a sickly and cowardly egoism?

My optimism has had a rude shock of late. I was so joyful at the idea of seeing you here that my courage had revived. I seemed to be warming up to a

return to my old self and now comes the news of your anxiety about your old mother's health. I certainly have no claim which can equal that!

Well, if I can finish *Cadio* before you leave for Paris I will come with Maurice to greet you, but I am harnessed to my book on pain of not being able to pay my tobacconist and boot-maker. If I cannot see you then, I shall hope for a meeting at midsummer. My children who are also much disappointed at the delay, will live in the same hopes and all the more because it will mean good news of your dear mother.

Maurice has plunged into natural history again; he wants to master *micros* and I am learning something of it, at second-hand from him. When I have packed my brain with the names and appearance of two or three thousand imperceptibly different varieties I shall have made a great advance, shall I not?

Studies of that kind are real octopuses in their power of enlacing you, and they also open infinite windows upon the infinite. You ask whether it is man's destiny to *drink in the infinite*? Oh! my God! Yes! Never doubt that! It is man's destiny, since it is his passion and his dream.

To *invent* is another passion; but what exhaustion follolws it! How emptied, how drained, one feels intelectually after having scribbled for weeks and months on the subject of that biped who alone has the right to appear in novels!

Maurice visibly regains youth and vigour when he returns to his beasts and his stones, and if I have any hope of my emerging from my particular misery I place it in the possibility of burying myself in studies which as the *épiciers* always say are "no good to anybody." Surely it is a better form of worship than saying Mass and *ringing* for the adoration of our Creator.

Is what you tell me about G—— really true? Can it be possible? Can the atmosphere of the earth at

this moment be engendering a gas, "*laughing*" or otherwise, which seizes possession of the brain in an instant and compels the sufferer to perform extravagant actions, as during the first Revolution an irritating fluid was in use which drove men and women to cruel actions. We have been transported from Dante's hell to Scarron's.

What is your fine brain thinking, and what is your good heart feeling in the midst of this bacchanal? If you are in a rage I shall be glad. I prefer that to finding you amused at it all! But what happens when you calm down and reflect? However one must find some means of accepting the honour, the duty and the fatigue of living all of a piece. I have thrown myself into the idea of an eternal pilgrimage through better and more amusing worlds, but one must be able to pass through them quickly with constant change. This life which we are so afraid of losing is always too long for those who take in what they see, in a flash. Everything repeats itself and then repeats itself again, eternally.

I assure you life holds only one pleasure: to learn what one does not know, and only one happiness: to love exceptional beings. That is why I love you and send you a tender kiss.

I am uneasy about Saint-Beuve. What a loss he would be! I am glad if Bouilhot is pleased. Is it a good position for him?

GEORGE SAND.

TO FLAUBERT

Nohant, 30th May, 1867.

So you are home again, old friend of my heart, and Maurice and I really must come to see you and embrace you. If you are as usual deep in work we will do no

more than arrive and depart. It is so near Paris that no one will be put out in any way. Oh! I have finished *Cadio*! Ouf!!! I have only got to polish it up a little now. It is really like a malady, to carry a burden like that about so long in one's mental being. I was so much interrupted by real illness that I found it difficult to take up the work again. But I am marvellously well since the fine weather came back and I am going to take a refreshing plunge into botany.

Maurice is taking a plunge into entomology. He will walk ten miles or so with some friend whose powers match his own, searching an immense tract of land for some creature which has to be examined under a magnifying-glass; that is true happiness! To be lost in some mania! I got rid of all my melancholy in writing *Cadio* and now I feel about fifteen years old and everything seems for the best in the best of all possible worlds. That feeling will last just so long as it will! We have occasional accesses of innocence in which oblivion of evil becomes tantamount to the inexperience of the Golden Age.

How is your dear mother? Is she happy to get you back again? And your novel? It must be getting on. Do you take any exercise? Are you any more reasonable?

The other day there were some not too stupid people here who discussed *Madame Bovary* quite intelligently but they did not appreciate *Salammbo*. Lina got quite red with anger, not wishing to allow the poor creatures one adverse criticism; but Maurice was obliged to quiet her, and thereupon proceeded to deliver an excellent appreciation of the book, the criticism of an artist and scholar, and he did it so well that the recalcitrants were obliged to surrender arms. I wish I had written down what he said. He is not much of a speaker and generally does it badly, but this time it was extraordinarily successful.

So I want to say not Adieu, but Aurevoir to you as

soon as may be. I am very fond of you, my dear old boy, and you know it. It would be ideal to live through long years with a great and good heart like yours. But then one would not be inclined for death when one is really getting old, as I am, one must be prepared for anything.

I kiss you tenderly and so does Maurice. Aurore is a most sweet and mischievous little person. Her father gives her something to drink saying: *Dominus vobiscum*! then she drinks and answers: *Amen*! She can walk now. How marvellous is the development of a small child. That has never been done in a book. Followed from day to day how precious it is. It is one of those miracles which we see every day and yet are blind to. Good-bye once more. Think of your old troubadour who is always thinking of you.

TO FLAUBERT

Nohant, 14 *June*, 1867.

Dear Friend,

I am going up with my son and his wife to spend a fortnight in Paris perhaps more if the revival of *Villemer* delays me there. Thus your dear good mother whom I do not want to miss either, will have plenty of time to go and see her "daughters." I shall wait in Paris until I hear from you that she has come back, Or if I am to make you a real visit you must tell me what would be the best date for it.

For the moment my intention is only that of spending an hour with you, and Lina wants to come too. I shall have to show her round Rouen and then when we have been in to salute you, we must return the same evening to Paris for the dear girl always has both ear and heart on the alert when she is separated from Aurore and her holidays are strictly limited by an anxiety which I thoroughly understand. So we shall

just run in to have a word with you. If even that is impossible, I will come later on at some moment which your heart may dictate and if you go down to the South I will put it off until it is quite convenient without upsetting your plans or your mother's in any way. I myself am quite free. So you must not put yourself out and must make your plans for the summer without considering me.

I too have about thirty-six projects on hand; but I am not bound to any one of them, I only really enjoy things that turn up unexpectedly, things that I settle at the last minute. It is the same with travel as with novels, anything which must be seized in passing is the master. Only when one is in Paris going to Rouen cannot be called a journey and I shall be always the same when there, that is, at your beck and call. I feel rather remorseful at the idea of taking up whole days which you might give to your work; but you see I am never tired of idling about and you could leave me sitting under a tree for two hours at a time watching two lighted faggots with the certainty that I should extract something interesting from the situation. I know so well how to live *outside myself*. It was not ever so! I have been young and subject to moral indigestion in my day but that is all over!

Since I have turned to Nature I have discovered there an order, a sequence and a placidity in periodical revolution which is lacking in man, but which man can assimilate up to a certain point when he is not too directly at grips with the difficulties of his own life. When these difficulties return he is obliged to try and fend them off, but if once he has drunk from the cup of eternal verities, he cannot any longer raise much enthusiasm for or against a relative and ephemeral truth.

But why do I say that? Because it runs off the tip of my pen; for when we really come to think of it, your state of ever-excitement is probably nearer to

Truth, at any rate, is probably more fertile and more human than my tranquillity which results from advancing age. I would not have you in my condition even if by the wave of a magic wand I could bring it about. I should not be at all interested in myself if I had the honour of meeting myself. I should tell myself that a " troubadour " is enough for anyone to deal with and I should despatch my other being to Chaillot.

A propos of gypsies, did you know that there were sea-gypsies? In the neighbourhood of Tamaris amongst hidden rocks I come upon some big boats, well sheltered and concealed, with women and children on board belonging to the population of the coast, a sun-bronzed people, very quiet and well conducted, fishing for their livelihood, without making much out of it; speaking a language of their own that the other inhabitants of the district do not understand, with no other dwelling than these big boats which are beached on the sand when rough weather frets them too much in the anchorages between the rocks; they inter-marry always and are sombre but inoffensive people, either very shy or very gruff, and simply do not answer when spoken to. I cannot remember now what they are called. I was told the name but it has escaped me. I could find it out again. Naturally the other people of the country-side abominate them and say that they have absolutely no religion; if so, they must be superior to us. I ventured alone amongst them. " Good-day, gentlemen! " I said, and received only a slight jerk of the head. I looked about their encampment, but no one took any notice. They behaved as if they did not see me. I asked whether my curiosity annoyed them. A shrug of the shoulders was the only reply as if to say, " What difference can it make to us? " I addressed a youth who was mending the meshes of a net very skilfully; I held out a gold five franc piece. He turned his head away. I held

out a silver coin. He deigned to look at it. "Would you like to have it?" He bent his head over his work. I put it down close beside him and he did not move. I moved away and he followed me with his eyes. When he considered that I could no longer see him, he took it up and went to discuss the matter with a group of his fellows. I do not know what was going on. I imagine that any such windfall is added to the common stock. I began botanising a little way off in sight of them to see whether anyone would come to ask for more or to thank me; nobody moved. As if by chance, I strayed in their direction again and met with the same silence and the same indifference. About an hour later when I was on the top of the cliff I asked the coastguard who these people are, who speak neither French, nor Italian, nor the dialect. He did tell me their name and now I have forgotten it.

He had an idea that they were Moors who had stayed on this coast since the date of their great invasions of Provence, and he may be right. He told me that he had seen me in the midst of them from the height of his look-out and that it was a rash thing to do, as they are capable of anything, but when I asked him how they misconducted themselves, he had to admit that they never did any harm at all. They lived on the fish they caught and above all on stray animals which they were very skilful in catching before even the most watchful of the ordinary denizens of the land. They were the objects of supreme contempt from everybody. Why? Always the same story. He who does not do the same as others, is always an object of suspicion and can do nothing right. If you should explore that part of the world you may perhaps come across them at the headland of the *Brusq*, but they are birds of passage and there are some years when they are not seen at all. I have not had a glimpse of the Paris-Guide. They really should have sent me a copy

though, because I sent them a contribution free of any fee. Probably that is why they have passed me over.

Well, to conclude, I shall be in Paris from the 20th June to the 5th July. Let me have news of you at the same address as usual, rue des Feuillantines, 97. I shall perhaps stay longer but cannot tell yet. A tender kiss for you, my friend. Do take a little exercise I beg of you. I have no fears for your novel, but I do fear for a nervous system which takes the place of the muscular system. I am very well, except for sudden attacks when I simply fall upon my bed and lie still for forty-eight hours, without wanting to talk to anybody. But they are very few and far between and I get up again quite recovered unless I weaken so far as to allow people to nurse me. Maurice sends tender message. Entomology has got hold of him again this year. He is discovering marvels. Kiss your mother from me and take good care of her. I love you with all my heart.

TO HENRY HARRIS

(In Vienna)

Nohant, 23 June, 1867.

DEAR FRIEND,

I have written to you twice and you wrote from Venice that you had heard nothing from me. So Italy is still the land where nothing goes right, not even the post, and where letters undergo some mysterious embargo. I felt sure that you would sustain some terrible disillusionments. You cannot have a foreign tyranny and the Pope oppressing a country heavily for centuries and then find that country preserving its youth and beauty.

Slavery is a crime on the part of those who submit to it, as well as in those who impose it. Slaves almost deserve their chastisement, which is to undergo the slavery they have submitted to.

Yet I had dreamed of seeing Venice free! But if everything goes from bad to worse and if liberty cannot restore life to it, it is even sadder than to see it oppressed. I wonder where you are now, and whether you will receive this letter? I doubt it as my others seem to have been suppressed. God knows though that they will not prove very interesting to the Papal police. I think you will be cured and comforted by the sight of mountains. Those great marvels change not.

You ask me where I shall be in September. At Nohant probably and yet I do not know. If we ever have any summer, I shall rush off on my travels for a while. For the second year running we are having deplorable weather, storms, rain, and it is quite cold. It was warmer in Paris where I spent a few weeks with my children, and where the Exhibition interested me enormously. I shall return there when I can. But I really do not know what my plans will be. I am so calm here and I have the pleasure of watching the little one's progress. I am working but not at high pressure. *Cadio* has been finished for a long time and is awaiting its turn in the *Revue*.

Do not leave Europe without managing to meet me again. We will make some good arrangement for settling near each other when you return to France. My children send you kind remembrances and I wish you a successful voyage and good health.

Yours most sincerely,

G. Sand.

TO FLAUBERT

Nohant, 6 *August*, 1867.

When I see what anguish it gives my old boy to perpetrate a novel, I feel ashamed of my own facility and I tell myself that I am botching up cobbled literature. I have finished *Cadio* and it has been in the claws of Buloz for a long time now. I am constructing another contraption,[1] but I do not see my way clear before me with it; what can one do of any kind without sunshine or warmth! I ought to be in Paris now to go round the Exhibition again and to enjoy it with your mother and with you, but I must work for I have nothing else to live on. And then there are the children! Our Aurore is a marvel. You ought to see her. I shall not have very long for contemplation of her perhaps. I do not feel that I shall make old bones; so I must love while I can.

Yes, you are right. That is my support. This crisis of hypocritical thought and action is rolling up a very sturdy retort but one will lose nothing by waiting. On the contrary one gains by it. You will see that some day, you who are middle-aged yet perennially young! You are about my son's age, and you will laugh over it together when you see all this mass of rubbish in public life fall into ruins.

You must not be exclusively Norman, you must come and spend several days with us. It would make us so happy and it would send the blood into my veins and joy into my heart.

Love your old troubadour as before and send her a few words about Paris when you have time. Sketch out a play for four or five characters for Nohant and we will act it for you. You are embraced and implored to come.

[1] Mademoiselle Merquem.

TO FLAUBERT

Nohant, August, 1867.

I bless you, my dear old boy, for your kind intention of coming here, but you were quite right not to travel when unwell. Oh! my God! I dream of nothing but illness and misfortune: take care of yourself, my old comrade. I shall come and see you if I can get up my strength, for since this last stab of Fate,[1] I am dazed and feeble and smitten with a species of fever. I will write you a line from Paris. If you are prevented from coming you must answer by telegram. You know that I do not exact explanations: I quite understand all the obstacles in life and I never heap accusations upon the hearts that I know—I only wish that as soon as possible if you have a moment to write to me you would tell me where I should go to spend two or three days on the coast of Normandy without meeting a crowd. In order to get on with my book I need to see some Channel coast scenery which has not all ready been done to death, where real natives live on their native heath or native beach, peasants and fishermen, I want a real village in a rocky cove. If you were feeling inclined for it we might go together. If not do not worry about me. I go everywhere alone and am never to be perturbed by anything. You told me that the coast population are the best of the department and I should find real hardened old salts amongst it. It would be interesting to study their faces, their costume, their houses and their horizon. It would be all I need for what I want to do, it is only an accessory in my book; I shall barely take notes of it all, it will be enough for me to see it, to prevent my putting in even a sunbeam amiss. How is your mother? Were you able to take her out and amuse her a little? Kiss her for me as I kiss you.

[1] The death of her old friend Rollinat.

Maurice greets you. I am going up to Paris without him; he is summoned to sit on the jury from the 2nd of September, until goodness knows when. . . . It is really "forced labour." Aurore is tremendously coquettish about her arms; she offers them to be kissed; her hands are a marvel and unspeakably skilful for her age.

Au revoir then, if I can drag myself soon out of my present condition of weakness. Insomnia is the devil. One makes endless efforts to be cheerful during the day so as not to depress other people. But at night one has to retire into oneself.

TO ARMAND BARBÈS

August, 1867.

I have been struck down by a heavy sorrow. I have lost my friend Rollinat who was like a brother to me. I hardly realised that he was ill and he only lived eight miles away! I have been so dazed for several days that I have not been able to appreciate that it was a separation indeed, I *could* not believe it. Now I have begun to realise. It is the hour when one is forced to take courage which is the cruellest is it not?

People say that as one gets older one has less power of feeling, but it should be so, for we know that the separation will not be so long.

But this blow is a fearful chastisement to me. The further one goes on the journey the more need one has of leaning upon old and faithful fellow-travellers, and he was a proved and solid support if ever there was one! His was a soul like yours. Yes, he was worthy to be compared to you! I am sure that all is well with him where he is. He is receiving his reward and resting after long fatigue. Enlightenment must have come to him and a clearer hope. A better life has been given him to live and new duties with freshened

forces and a heart rejuvenated. But for me to live without his support will be difficult and cruel. . . .

TO FLAUBERT

Nohant, 10th September, 1867.

DEAR OLD BOY,

I am rather anxious about having had no news of you since the indisposition you spoke of. Are you well again? Yes, we will go and study shingle and cliff scenery together next month if you like. My novel is simply racing and I can lay on the local colour when revising.

In the meanwhile I am still here, dipping right up to my chin in the river every day and regaining all my strength in this cold shady stream which I adore, in which I have spent so many hours of my life, pulling myself together, after too lengthy tête-a-têtes with my ink-pot. I have quite settled to be in Paris on the 16th, and on the 17th I am leaving for Rouen at one o'clock to meet my friend Madame Lebarbier de Tinan at M. Lepel-Cointet's house. He is a local landowner and I shall stay there over the 18th, returning to Paris on the 19th. Is it likely that I can be so near you without coming in to embrace you? I shall be ill with anxiety to do so, but as I am absolutely obliged to be back in Paris on the 19th, I do not know whether I shall be able to manage it. You must tell me whether it suits you. You can write a line to Paris, rue des Feuillantines 97, for the 16th. I shall not be alone, my travelling companion will be Juliette Lamber, a charming young woman of letters. If you were really a nice, nice, boy, you would make an excursion to Jumiège on the 19th and we would come back together in time for me to be back in Paris at six o'clock in the evening at the latest. But if you are still rather unwell, or quite *plunged* into ink, take it that I have

said nothing at all and let us put off our meeting until next month. As for the *winter* excursion on the Norman coast it gives me shudders down the spine. I am planning to go to the Gulf of Juan at that time. I have been made quite ill by the death of my poor friend Rollinat. Now I am physically restored but how shall I heal the wound in my soul! The only way would be to pass a week with you and soak myself in tenderness and strength, for cold purely philosophical courage gives me the impression of a cautery on a wooden leg.

TO ARMAND BARBÈS

Nohant, 12 *Oct.*, 1867.

Dear Great Friend,

I send you Gustave Flaubert's thanks and also his scribble addressed to me in which he discusses you openly. And for my part I have to thank you for giving him the dates and information in a sure and direct manner; he is a great artist, and one of the very few of those, who is also a man. I am so happy that he likes you, it gives additional strength to his soul and to my affection for him. I too count your friendship for me as a great source of wealth in my life.

With all my might I have wasted everything which belongs to material existence, money, security, comfort, and *utility* as it is understood among the materialists. But I have appreciated and treasured the real things of life. You, and a very few others have given my heart that foundation of tenderness and respect which never wears out and which is always to be found intact in all the difficult and painful hours of life. If I had passed through the world as your soul-companion it would have counted in my favour in the scales where my sins and virtues were being weighed.

TO FLAUBERT

Nohant, 12 *Oct.*, 1867.

I sent your letter to Barbés. It is fine and gallant like yourself. I know that it will make the good fellow happy. But I am almost driven to throwing myself out of the window, for my children will not hear of my starting away again so soon. Yes, it was very stupid to have been four times within sight of your roof without coming in. But I have attacks of discretion which almost border on timidity. I did think of asking you to spend half an hour in Rouen as I was passing through. But you are not like me, *always ready to take wing*. You live in a dressing-gown, the great enemy of freedom and energy. The idea of asking you to dress and go out, perhaps in the middle of an attractive chapter, and all to meet someone who never knows what to say in a rapid interview, and is always her most stupid when she is most pleased! I did not dare. And besides here I am, obliged to finish something up which has been dragging along, and before the last revision of it I shall be off to Normandy probably. I want to go down the Seine to Honfleur: that will be for next month if the cold weather deos not make me ill, and I shall try this time to carry you off as I pass. If not I shall at least have a glimpse of you and then I am going to Provence. Ah! if I could carry you off there with me! And if you could, if you would, come and see me here during that second fortnight in October when you will be free! You did promise it and my children would be so pleased. But you do not love me well enough for that, scamp that you are! You think you have better friends, but that is just where you are mistaken. It is always the best friends who are neglected and ignored.

Now, do pluck up courage. You leave Paris at nine fifteen in the morning, you arrive at Chateauroux where my carriage will meet you, and get you here at

six o'clock for dinner. It will not be going to the devil, and once here, it is all laughter and jollity and freedom; we do not dress, we make no stipulations and we all love each other dearly. Say yes! I embrace you. I too, feel very cross that a *whole year* has gone by without our meeting.

TO FLAUBERT

Nohant, 28th October, 1867.

I have just written my impressions of the Normandy landscape in a few pages; it is nothing of importance but I was able to bring in three lines of *Salammbo* between inverted commas which appeared to me to paint the countryside better than all my phrases, lines which have always struck me like a magisterial stroke of the brush. Turning over the pages of *Salammbo* to find those lines I naturally re-read almost the whole book, and I remain convinced that it is one of the most beautiful books which has ever been written since books have been written at all.

I am well and am working much and at high pressure in order to purchase myself a winter in the South. But what will the delights of Cannes consist of, and shall I be able to find the heart to plunge into them? My spirit is enveloped in gloom when I consider that at this very moment there are people fighting for the Pope. Ah! Isodore!

I tried in vain to get a sight of *my Normandy* this month, that is, a sight of the dear friend of my heart. My children have threatened me with death from various causes if I leave them again so soon. Now there are people coming to stay with us. You are the only one who does not write and say he is coming. And yet it would be so good to see you! I embrace you.

G. Sand.

TO FLAUBERT

Nohant, 5th December, 1867.

Your old "Troubadour" is quite irrational I know. "He" has worked like a galley-slave to have enough money to go to Gulf Juan this winter, and at the very moment of starting "he" does not want to go. "He" is unwilling to leave "his" children and the little Aurora, but the cold weather is very bad for "him," "he" is afraid of getting anæmic, and "he" thinks it "his" duty to search out a land which is not rendered impracticable by snow and a sky under which one can draw breath without drawing needles through one's lungs.

There!

"He" has been thinking of you, probably more than you have been thinking of "him," for "his" work is stupid and facile and does not hold "his" deepest attention, and "his" thoughts travel far from "his" work when "his" hand tires of writing.

You are working towards Truth and it absorbs you and you were right not to listen to my spirit knocking more than once on the door of your study just to say "It is I!" Or else you said: "It is a spirit rapping! May it go to the devil!" Are you not coming to Paris? I shall be there from the 15th to the 20th. I shall only stay a few days and then escape to Cannes. Will you be up in Paris then? God grant it! On the whole I am pretty well. I am furious with you for not coming to Nohant; I do not say much about it to you for I am no good at reproaches. I have perpetrated a great many scratches on good paper. My children are still wonderful to me in every sense of the word. Aurore is a love.

We have been raging over politics; and now we try to think no more about it and to have patience.

We often speak of you and we love you, especially your old "troubadour" who embraces you with all her heart and asks to be remembered to your good mother.

TO SAINTE-BEUVE

Nohant, 30th December, 1867.

Dear Friend,

So you are better at last! I have known all about your suffering and have suffered for you. I know also how courageous you are and I hope that the new year just beginning will go better for you.

Do not trouble to write to me. I get news of you from our kind good Harris. I only want to send you this greeting and to let you know how much I am thinking of you.

TO FLAUBERT

Nohant, 31 *December*, 1867.

I am not of your opinion that one must sacrifice a breast in order to draw the bow! My belief is an exactly contrary one, and I believe it would suit a great many other people, in fact almost everybody. I have just been developing this theory of mine in a novel which has been sent to the *Revue* and will appear next after About's.

I think an artist ought to live according to his own nature so far as it is possible. Then let the fighter fight, and the lover, love; while an aging artist like myself, loves nature, travel, botany and geology, and children and family life, and everything which moves one's heart, and combats moral anæmia.

I think that art needs a palette always overflowing with tender or violent colours according to the subject

of the picture; that the artist is an instrument which should be played upon by all, before he can play upon others, but all that is perhaps not applicable to a spirit of your type, which has already acquired much sustenance and has only to digest it. I shall only insist upon one point which is that the physical being is entirely necessary to the moral being, and that I fear a breakdown in health for you some time or another, which will force you to stop your work and leave it to get cold.

So you are coming to Paris at the beginning of January and we shall see each other, for I am not going up until after New Year's Day. My children have made me swear to spend that day with them and I did not know how to refuse in spite of a terrific need of locomotion. They are so dear to me! Maurice has an inexhaustible fund of cheerfulness and inventiveness. He has made his marionette theatre a marvel of stage setting with every kind of dodge to get effects, and the pieces that are played in this entrancing stage are fantastic beyond words.

Maurice's public is composed of eight or ten young people, my three great nephews and the sons of old friends. They enjoy it to the point of shouting their applause! Aurore is not admitted, for these games are not for a lady of her age. I am amused to the point of exhaustion. I am sure you would enjoy it wildly too, for there is a splendid animation and freedom in these improvisations and the marionettes carved by Maurice have a burlesque appearance of being alive. That is how I have been spending the last fortnight since I gave up working.

Maurice always provides this recreation during my holidays which coincide with his. And he brings as much method and as much enthusiasm to it as he does to his scientific studies. He really has the most charming of natures and one can never be dull with him. His wife too is charming, Her figure shows

what is going to happen now; but she is always active and attending to everything as usual. Twenty times in the day, she will lie down on the sofa and then jump up to run to her little girl, to tell the cook something or to do something for her husband, who is always wanting a variety of different things for his theatre, then she will go and lie down again, crying out that she feels very ill, and then laughing at a fly buzzing past; chattering about baby-clothes, eagerly reading newspapers, and novels which make her cry, and crying at the marionettes too when there is a touch of sentiment, for there is sometimes. In conclusion one may say she is a type of her own; she sings absolutely ravishingly, she has a hot temper and a tender heart; she can make the most succulent sweetmeats as a surprise, and every day of our holidays is a little festival which she organises for us.

Little Aurore promises to be gentle and thoughtful, understanding what one says in the most marvellous manner and at two years old *yielding to reason*. It is extraordinary and I have never seen anything like it. It might even be disturbing, were it not for the absolute reposefulness in all the action of this little brain.

But how I am chattering on with you! Does any of this amuse you! I wanted to make a letter full of gossip replace one of our suppers, to which I too look back regretfully; they would be so delightful here too if you were not a lump of lead which cannot be dragged *into life for life's own sake*. Oh! when one is at leisure what strange *see-saws* work and logic seem. One wonders if it is possible ever to return to that punishment drill.

I embrace you tenderly, my dear old boy, and Maurice thinks your letter so fine that he is going to transfer whole phrases of it to the mouth of the first philosopher he introduces into a book. He begs me to send you a kiss.

Madame Juliette Lamber[1] is really charming. It is about 18 degrees above zero down at Gulf Juan while we have snow here. It is very hard weather and we scarcely ever go out, not even my dog goes.

He is by no means the least fascinating member of our party. When he is called Badinguet, for some reason he lies down looking ashamed and despairing, and then he sulks all the evening.

TO CHARLES PONCY

Gulf Juan, 22 February, 1868.
Villa Bruyeres, Vallauris.

DEAR FRIEND,

We are very comfortably installed, very well looked after, very active, very contented. We are leaving the day after to-morrow for Nice, Monaco, Mentone, etc. We shall be away for three or four days. So try not to have any business here until the end of the week. We are always here on Fridays, for instance, because it is Madame Lamber's reception-day. You must let us know if you mean to come any other day, because we very often spend the whole day upon some long expedition out of doors. In any case we shall do our best to go round Toulon with you once or twice when we return from this trip.

Good-night, dear boy. I could almost go to sleep standing because I have walked so far to-day.

Kiss your two little girls tenderly for me. Greetings from Maurice, and thanks from Maxime for the friendly help you have afforded him.

[1] Afterwards Madame Edmond Adam.

TO MADAME JULIETTE LAMBER

(still at Gulf Juan)

Nohant, 23 March, 1868.

DEAR CHILD,

You say you want to feel *calm*. If it were possible I should say: "Be quick about it for the sake of your health and your sleep and in consequence your happiness, for continuous suffering can only be combatted by distraction, and even then true well-being of the soul cannot be attained." But one can be calm by willing it? God knows that I have willed it often enough for myself, but is it not old age which has worked the miracle? I think it must be. That remedy will come to you in due course. It brings a great detachment which comes into its power at its own time, if one will only submit to fate without vexation or regret. There is no great merit in doing so, it is merely an affair of common sense. But should youth step ahead of the work of time? Certainly not. The great charm of youth is its impressionability. Remain just as you are with a few slight modifications, so that the qualities of your age may not be excessive in any way, and in consequence have painful consequences for yourself. You are high-spirited and passionate, and that is fine and it is beautiful too and wins you love. But you are rich enough to live on your treasure, do not try to make yourself a millionaire and so get ruined. I do feel that you are rather affected sometimes, perhaps from sheer desire to experience suffering, but that is excess. All quality, all power has its saturation point, and upon that your philosophy can act to a certain degree. At first it seems that one can only make very small conquests of oneself but insensibly they become ampler and easier every day. It is the law of strength in flight, it is always increased as the flight is prolonged.

I do not want to say any more on that point. Give out your riches, but do not rob yourself? That insomnia for instance does not pertain to youth, therefore there must be some reform needed in your method of self-development, in the depths of the brain perhaps. You have no chronic illness. I have been observing you attentively. You are very strong and well-balanced. The cause of your insomnia is in your spirit rather than your body if one can thus separate two entities which are really one.

But as they re-act upon one another every instant of our lives we must essay the great fight. The most materialistic of doctors do not deny the possibility of mind overcoming matter. It is also a question of régime. When one has been writing something which does not excite the nerves it is easy enough to sleep afterwards; but it is rare for the nerves to be in repose if the imagination is at work. So you should never write in the evening but in the morning before you have given Toto her lessons. That would leave you the rest of the day to busy yourself with her, your household and your friends. In that way you would be sure to get to sleep at eleven o'clock at night and you would have had enough rest if you get up at six. Try that and see how it works. My life is quite differently arranged. But if I found I could not sleep I should not hesitate to change all my habits at once. Work is an act of lucidity And there is no complete lucidity without previous repose. Pardon me for all these very ordinary statements for even your energy and ardour cannot alter the fatal and imperturbable truth of them! My Lina does not flatter herself that she is placid, but she has great outbursts of will-power and rationality which succeed each other and are attached to each other even after some acute emotion seems to have broken them up. Hers is a very rare nature, great force within exquisite finesse. She is disposed to be fond of you, but she is not expansive,

on the contrary she is reserved when you meet her for the first time, observing more than she ever dreams of showing she observes. She would have been an artist if she were not first and foremost a mother. That feeling has absorbed her whole life for the last six years. She has put her whole soul into it.

Our little girls are flourishing. Aurore has developed with the spring more than she did during the whole winter. She is now getting more impetuous and capricious. She has a quite immoderate need of movement. All the better! The other baby seems to give promise of turning out the goddess of tranquility, but beware of the first teeth!

Good-night, my dear sweet one, tender kisses to Toto and yourself. A thousand friendly greetings to Adam, who is no ordinary man. There is no need to tell you that I am able to appreciate him. A kind heart, an excellent brain and judgment, gentleness and exquisite fineness of soul, he has them all and all the qualities that I esteem most in the male sex. Get him well quickly and bring him to us as soon as you can.

Give my compliments to all the pleasant people who surround you, and remember me to your kindly brigands of both sexes [the servants probably].

TO HENRY HARRIS

Nohant, 9th April, 1868.

DEAR FRIEND,

I was still unwell when I arrived here and worn out in any case although the journey is really nothing, especially as I sleep in the train better than in my bed. But I am appreciably weaker this year and I must either be patient or resign myself to loss of vital energy. At any rate I have no definite suffering. I found my charming daughter-in-law as charming as ever and my youngest grand-daughter able to give big kisses and

to walk alone. Dear child! But I *dare* not adore her. It was such a cruel wrench for me to lose the others. She is strong and in splendid health, but I can no longer believe in the possibility of any happiness, although to my children I appear to be hopefulness personified.

Nohant is already a bower of foliage and flowers, far more forward than Paris or Palaiseau. It is not cold, but we have had hurricanes as bad as those at sea. Maurice has completed all the corrections that you suggested. He asks me to renew the expression of his cordial gratitude and to give you his warm thanks. I have to thank you as always for your good letters with all their interesting details of our literary friends. You evidently revel in existing in that captious atmosphere. It belongs to your time of life. I am very fond of it when I am there, but I do not know whether I could live there always without perishing. I am a peasant morally and physically. Brought up on the land I have never been able to change my nature, and when I was quite young, literary society was out of my reach. When I got into it, it was like plunging into an ocean where I lost all my personality and I soon had an immense longing to be alone again or with primitive beings. Our peasants of that day were rather like wild Indians. They are more civilised now and I am less of a savage. Never mind, I still take a great deal of pleasure in meeting people without much mind, whom one can understand without effort and listen to without astonishment. But I do not want to disenchant you since you have found enchantment, all the less because I admit that I fall under the spell very readily when I come back into the stream. I see that you have fallen under the spell of the rue de Courcelles. The charm there is very great, more sustained but less intense than that of the *brother*.

These two persons would be very much missed if

the storm which is blowing up should carry them away from us. But what is to be done? All revolutions are brutal, suspicious and unthinking. I do not know what republican thought is aiming at now. I lost the thread of this labyrinth of dreams long ago. My ideal will always be expressed in the words: *Liberty, Equality, Fraternity*. But through whom, and how and when it will be realised? I cannot tell. What I do know is that one hears a cry coming from every corner of the earth, from the trees and the houses and the clouds—it is a voice crying aloud: "*We have had enough of it!*"

Do not forget your promise to come and see us.

Yours with all my heart.

G. Sand.

TO LOUIS VIARDOT

Nohant, 10 *June*, 1868.

Dear Friend,

You wrote to me on the 10th April: "Tell me your plans when you know them yourself." Well—I spent the whole month of May in Paris . . . kept at watch there by the condition of a young friend condemned by the doctors. It was the problem of a pregnancy which seemed quite insoluble. But Nature worked a miracle, and mother and child are doing well. But to those days of anxiety and crisis I had to sacrifice the fortnight which I was reserving for myself, and then came a move to manage by railway, and then after all that I was tired and felt the need of returning to my own dear brood. At present I have a big work on hand, three months without slackening! I cannot hope for a little leisure until the month of September. So you had better go to take the waters . . . if you have not gone already. . . . I was really rather aggrieved at being cooped up in Paris during the

radiant month of May. But I was so uneasy and I was bent on helping a young woman who rendered me me the most devoted services in former days. It is the wife of my little friend Lambert, whom you know, the animal painter. He has a great talent now that it has time to develop, and an incomparable wife and help-meet, and a very pretty little baby who arrived as if by miracle. But no baby and nothing in the world is as pretty as my little Aurore; she is as fascinating and intelligent as your Claudia must have been at that age. The other little girl is springing up like a mushroom, and Bouli (we still call Maurice), is happier in his married life than any one I have ever seen. He still has a passion for natural history. We have *Micro* staying with us now, a friend whom Pauline will perhaps remember, the tall, thin, bristling, fantastic brother of our old Eliza Tourangin. He is exactly what he always was, and as he always did, he spends his days analysing a butterfly's wing, or the capsule of a plant. The botany mania has attacked me pretty extensively and apropos of natural history, I have certainly read and commented upon all that is written to prove and to disprove the same contentions. So be it, but for my part I am able to combine a mixture of spiritualism and pantheism without the smallest trouble. Every one lives on the wine that he can produce for himself. I do not see the necessity of forcing one's understanding, and of destroying certain precious faculties in oneself to make a sacrifice to the ultra-pious. There are no ultra-pious nowadays. There are only imbeciles and hypocrites. I shall not do them the honour of modifying myself in order to combat them. I think the best campaign for science to attempt is to go straight on its course, since each one of its forward steps drives the Church a little further underground. It neither necessary nor useful perhaps to prate so much about the void, because after all, we know

nothing about that or anything else beyond this life. Truth should serve as a banner in the fight; do not let us drape that splendid nudity in our own opinions, for it has never been shewn to us without its veils. Seek out Truth, but do not try to force it to appear with borrowed features. It seems to me that at the present day we are going too far in the affirmation of a narrow and rather coarse realism in science, as well as art.

This reproach is not addressed to you, dear friend. You lived a long time within the tents of the very spiritual philosophy of Reynaud and Leroux. Then you relinquished that, without submitting to any influence outside your own mind, and in so doing you made use of the sacred right of all men to liberty. So many others have deserted our opinions of those days only to throw themselves into Catholicism that your protestation is a worthy and legitimate one. I too have stepped a little further, forward or to one side, I do not know which, backward perhaps. No matter, I too have thought the matter out for myself and I insensibly modified my opinions. But while ardently claiming the right for science of telling us all she knows, and even all she supposes, I cannot conceive that she should command us: "Believe that with me, on pain of being left behind in the past. You must destroy in order to prove, and knock down everything in order to reconstruct." My answer is; Limit yourself to proof and do not give us any orders. It does not come within the province of science to tear things down with angry blows, driven along by passion. Leave contempt to slay any inbecilities of supernatural doctrines and do not waste time in reasoning against that which has no power of reasoning. Learn and teach. To say: "You must believe that we have found Truth," does not mean that Truth has been found. It is merely to talk like the priests. Science is the road to Truth; so much is certain, but it is still

far from the end, whether it affirms or denies that it holds the key to the vault of the Universe. The only thing in your letter that I am going to heckle you about is when you say: "either faith must burn so hotly that it destroys science, or science must drive out and destroy faith." This doctrine of mutual extermination does not seem to me either a war-like deed or the fitting task of a generation. Liberty would perish under its auspices. What is needed is for all sincere minds to join in seeking the Truth, and then it should triumph through the very force of things.

But enough of distinctions. *Let us all join together in the love of truth and the worship of free thought.* That is the first point of my religion ,and you must believe that your incredulity does not scandalise me in the least. Yours from my heart. Friendly and tender greetings from us all to the great Pauline and to you and all the children. I hope that all are well, you to begin with and that you will not leave me long without some news.

G. Sand.

TO FLAUBERT

Nohant, 21st June, 1868.

Here I am bothering you again about Monsieur du Camp's address which you have never given me. I have just been reading his book on *Forces Perdues*; I promised to let him know my opinion and I am going to keep my word. Write the address, post it and then thank you.

So now you are alone with the sunshine in your charming villa.

Why am I not there? . . . oh! the river which lulls you with its sweet murmur and brings cool freshness to your cell! I should converse with you discreetly now and then between two pages of your

novel, and I should make you forget the fantastic grinding of the chain which you detest, while its strangeness however does not displease me.[1] I like everything which gives a place characteristic features, the sound of traffic in Paris, the notes of a thousand birds in the country-side and the movement of embarcations on the rivers. I also love absolute deep silence, and to sum it all up I love everything around me wherever I may be. Would you call that *auditory imbecility*, a new type? It is true that I always choose my surroundings, and that I never go to the Senate.

All goes well here, my troubadour. The children are so beautiful that we simply adore them; it is hot weather and I adore that. I always sing you the same canticle, do I not, and I love you as the best of friends and comrades. That is not new either. I keep a strong recollection of what you read to me, it seemed so beautiful, that it is not possible that it is not good. I am doing nothing myself. The loitering habit is entirely dominating me, but one thing that will never pass away is my friendship for you.

Tender messages from my children as ever.

TO FLAUBERT

Nohant, 31 *July*, 1868.

I write to you at Croisset as usual, as I doubt whether you are still in Paris in this heat (which would only be natural in Toledo), unless you have taken refuge in the leafy shades of Fontainebleau. Isn't it a fascinating bit of woodland, but it is in winter with the leafless trees and the carpet of fresh mosses that it is intensely chic! Have you ever been to see the sands of Arbonne? There is a miniature Sahara there which must be very attractive just now.

[1] The chain of a tug going up or down the Seine.

We are very happy here. Everyday we bathe in the river which is still cold and shady; then four hours of work in the day, and in the evening, recreation and the life of buffoons. A romantic farce was played here by a touring company from the Odéon amongst whom we found several old friends, and we gave them a supper at La Châtre two nights running after the performance, the whole lot of them; we had music and laughter and iced champagne until three o'clock in the morning to the great disapprobation of the *bourgeoisie* who, however, stuck at nothing in order to get invited too. Amongst the troupe there was a Norman comedian, a true Norman who sang various folk-songs in the real dialect. There are peasant's songs you know of essentially Gallic wit and mischief. There is an unexplored mine for somebody, for there are masterpieces to be found among them. It made me love Normandy more than ever. Perhaps you know this comedian? His name is Fréville: In their repertoire he took all the parts of heavy-witted footmen who get kicked. Off the stage he is a charming boy and amusing enough for ten. What a strange affair is destiny! We have some charming visitors staying here and we have lived most merrily without any "let or hindrance" to the *Lettres d'un Voyageur* in the *Revue* or to our botanical studies on some very astonishing uncultivated tracts of land about here. And the best of the whole thing is the children, Gabrielle a plump little lamb, sleeping and laughing all day; Aurore of finer metal, with eyes of velvet and fire, talking like a child of five, though she is not yet three years old, and adorable in everything. We try to keep her back so that she shall not develop too fast. You make me rather uneasy when you say that your book accuses the patriots of all the harm done; is that really true? And what about the defeated? It is quite bad enough to be defeated through one's

own fault without all one's stupidities being spat out at one. Do be merciful. Even so, there are and have been so many fine souls. Christianity has certainly been a mania, but I must admit that it is seductive in every age, when we only look on its tender side; it wins the heart. We have to consider all the harm it has done, in order to dismiss it. But I am not in the least surprised that a generous heart like Louis Blanc's should dream of seeing it purified and brought back to the ideal. I too cherish that illusion; but no sooner has one taken a few steps into the past than one realizes that it cannot be revived and I am sure that by this time Louis Blanc is smiling over his own dream. We must think of that too.

We must remember that everybody with a mind has taken terrific strides in the last twenty years and it would be ungenerous to reproach them with things which are probably making them reproach themselves. As for Prudhon I never believed in his good faith. I have been told that he has a genius for rhetoric. But I cannot say that I can fathom him; he is a specimen of perpetual contradictions without a solution. On me, he merely makes the impression of one of those sophists whom the old Socrates used to ridicule.

My children send their greetings. Oh! the devil! There has been a raging discussion of *Salammbo* here; some one whom you do not know cannot permit himself to like it. Maurice dismissed him as a *bourgeois* and to settle it completely little Lina who is always stormy, declared that her husband was wrong not to use a stronger word and that he ought to have said *imbecile*. There!

I am as well and hearty as a Turk. I love and embrace you.

TO FLAUBERT

Paris, August, 1868.

For the moment, my dear friend, correspondence is a hazardous business. From all sides I am being reproached for not answering letters. I wrote to you from Nohant about a fortnight ago that I was leaving for Paris to see about *Cadio*—and I am starting for Nohant at dawn to-morrow to go and get a glimpse of my Aurore. A week ago I wrote four dramatic interludes, and I shall have no more to do with them until the rehearsals are over; my friend Paul Meurice has been kind enough to take charge of them. However all his care will not be able to prevent the entanglements of the first performances from being an appalling mess. The difficulties of producing a play have to be seen to be believed, and if one does not fit on a *breastplate* of humour and inner gaiety in the study of human nature, there is enough to make you *rage* against it. But I have long given up raging. I laugh instead. It is all too deadly familiar to me to move me now and I shall have some funny stories to tell you when we meet.

As I continue an optimist whatever happens I always look for the good side of people and things but the truth is that there is good and evil combined everywhere in this world.

Would you believe it, I have never been able to see Sainte-Beuve. I have only just time to eat and sleep here. It is always like that. I have heard nothing outside the affairs of the theatre and my actors. I have had mad desires to throw it all up and to come and pay you a surprise visit for two hours, but I was not left one day without being held a prisoner so to speak. I shall come back here at the end of the month and when *Cadio* is being performed I entreat you to spend twenty-four hours here in my honour. Will you?

Yes, you are too good a *troubadour* to refuse. I embrace you with all my heart and your dear Maman too. I am so glad that she is well...

G. SAND.

TO FLAUBERT

Nohant, 18 *September*, 1868.

I think it has been arranged for the 8th or 10th October. The director says the 26th September, but to everyone else that seems impossible. Nothing is ready. I shall be warned in time, and I will let you know. I am spending the days of respite that my very conscientious and devoted collaborator allows me, here. I have taken up a novel concerned with the stage of which I had left part one, on my bureau; and I bathe every day in a little icy torrent which knocks me about and makes me sleep like a top. How happy one is here with the two little girls who chatter and laugh like birds from morning to night, and how stupid it is to be composing and producing fictions when reality is so delightful and convenient. But one has accustomed oneself to looking upon one's work as a military duty, and one faces the guns without any enquiry whether one will be killed or merely wounded. Do you think I feel nervous? No, I assure you I do not, but I do not feel very happy about it either. I just go straight ahead as stupid as a cabbage and as patient as a peasant of Berri. In my life it is not myself but *others* who interest me, and to see you in Paris soon will be so sweet to me that it will outweigh the unpleasantness of my affairs. Your novel interests me more than all mine put together. My newest form of idiocy, complete impersonality, is making rapid progress. If I were not quite well I should think it was a sign of illness. If my old heart were not getting more affectionate every day I should treat it as a form of egotism; in short I do not know

how to account for it; it just *is* so. I have had cause for grief during the last few days. I told you all about it in the letter you did not receive. A woman friend of mine whom you know and whom I love much has gone over to the pious crew and has become an ecstatic, a mystic, a molinist, heaven knows what! I was completely shaken out of my calm and I stormed over it! I said the very hardest things and ridiculed it! Nothing to be done! She did not care! Father . . has replaced all friendship and all respect, in her eyes. Is this comprehensible? For she has a noble soul, a real mind and a fine character? And then T . . . has become pious too, but they have not been able to change her. She does not like priests or believe in the devil. She is a heretic without knowing it. Maurice and Lina are furious with the *other*. They do not love her any more. It is most painful to me not to love her as I did.

We love and embrace you, and I thank you for coming to *Cadio*.

TO FLAUBERT

Paris, end of September, 1868.

Dear Friend,

It is fixed for October 3rd. I am to be found at the theatre every day from six o'clock in the evening to two in the morning. They are talking of having some mattresses in the green-room for the actors who are not on the stage all the time. As for myself, accustomed to sitting up all night, like you, I do not experience any extra fatigue, but I should have a great deal of boredom to get through if I could not fall back on one's usual resource of thinking of something else. I very often think out another play while one is being rehearsed, and there is always something rather exciting in the great dark rooms, buzzing with mysterious personages who are talking in undertones,

dressed in fantastic costumes, nothing could be more like a dream, unless it were a conspiracy of escaped prisoners from Bicêtre.

I do not know at all how the performance will turn out. If one were not familiar with the miracles of team-work and will-power which are accomplished at the last moment, one would believe the whole thing impossible in the hands of thirty or forty actors of whom only six speak at all well. Hours pass in making characters enter and go out in white or blue blouses, who are to be soldiers or servants, but in the meantime only execute incomprehensible manœuvres. A dream—always a dream! Really it must be only the crazy who are able to produce plays! And then the feverish look of the actors, pale and exhausted, dragging themselves about yawning, and then suddenly starting ranting out the first lines of their tirades; it looks like an assemblage of madmen. The censor has left my manuscript in peace; but perhaps his minions will see costumes to-morrow which will give them something to say! I left my dear little world at Nohant quite tranquil. If *Cadio* is a success the proceeds shall be a *dot* for Aurore; that is my ambition. If it is a failure I must try again, that is all.

I shall see you, so in any case it is bound to be a happy day. Come to see me the day before if you arrive then, or if you only arrive on the day you must dine with me. The day before or the day itself I shall be at home from one o'clock to five. Thank you, I embrace and love you.

TO FLAUBERT

Nohant, 16 *October*, 1868.

Here I am *ceux nous*[1] and after having kissed my children and grand-children I slept for thirty-six hours at a stretch. You may well believe that I was tired

[1] Dialect for *chez nous*.

and that I had not perceived it until then. I woke from this *hibernation* as lazy as an animal and you are the first person I had any desire to write to. I have never thanked you enough for coming up to Paris on my account, you, who are so unwilling to move anywhere! Of course I did not see enough of you; when I heard that you had supped with Plauchut I was very angry with myself for having stayed to look after my worn-out Thuillier,[1] for I was not able to do her the least good and she was not specially grateful.

Artists are spoilt children and at their best they are tremendous egoists. You say that I am too fond of them. It is true that I love them as I love woods and fields and everything and everybody that I know well and have studied long. I made my own career among them and as I love my career I love everything which nourished and reared it, and renewed its strength. There are plenty of people still who try to make me miserable. I know what they are at but they have no effect on my feelings. I know that thorns are to be found in thickets, but that does not prevent me from plunging my hands into them to gather flowers. And if all the flowers are not beautiful, all are interesting. The day we made our expedition to the Abbaye de Saint-George I found the *scrofularia borealis*, a very rare plant in France. I was simply enchanted, but there was a lot of . . . in the place where I picked it. Such is life! And if one does not take life like that, one cannot get hold of it at all, and if one does not "grasp the nettle" how is one to endure the stinging? I find the whole thing so amusing and interesting and as I accept it *all*, I am all the more delighted and enthusiastic when I come across the good and the beautiful. If I had not had a vast experience in sorting and classifying human beings I should not have understood, known and loved you so rapidly. I am capable of immense indulgence which has become

[1] One of her actresses.

humdrum perhaps, because I have been called upon to use it so much, but appreciation is quite a different matter and there is still plenty of capacity for it, in the soul of your old troubadour.

I found my children as kind and tender as ever and my two little girls as sweet and lovely as ever. This morning I was dreaming just before I woke up to find myself making this queer remark aloud to myself. "There is always a principal part in the drama of life. Aurore plays the principal part in mine." The fact is that it is impossible not to idolise this little creature. She is so perfect both as to intelligence and heart that she simply seems too good to be true.

You are too good to be true, too . . . though you may not be aware of it. Plauchut met you only once and he adores you. That proves that he is anything but stupid. When he said good-bye to me in Paris he asked me to remember him to you.

I left *Cadio* alternately taking good and medium receipts, for the theatre. The cabal against the new directors broke down on the second day. The press has been divided, half favourable and half hostile. The fine weather is against us. Roger's detestable behaviour is against us too. So much so that we do not know yet whether we shall make any profit. For my part when I do make any money, I just say "all the better," without losing my head; and when I do not make any I just say "can't be helped" without any regret.

I have already started another play in order to keep my hand in. I have also got a new novel planned out on the subject of the coasting sea-gypsies. I have really studied them this time, but without learning anything fresh. I have the secret of the mechanism of my writing. It is not complicated and it is absolutely logical. I embrace you tenderly and your little mother too. Give me some sign of life. Is the novel going on well?

TO FLAUBERT

Nohant, 20 *November*, 1868.

You say: "When shall we be meeting again?" Towards the middle of December we are going to fix a date to baptise the two little girls as Protestants. It is Maurice's idea. He was married by a pastor and he is determined to avoid the Catholic influence, which may amount to persecution, for his daughters. Our friend Napoleon[1] will be Aurore's godfather and I her godmother. My nephew is the godfather of the baby. It will all be quite private here. You must come; Maurice wishes it so much and if you refuse you will pain him very much. You must bring your novel with you and when we have a free moment you must read it to me; it will help you to read it to a good listener. You will be able to judge better and to carry out a better revision. I know so well, believe me. Say yes to your old troubadour, who will be extra specially pleased if you do.

I will kiss you six times if you will say yes.

TO PRINCE JEROME

(who had been to Nohant for the Christening)

Nohant, 17 *Dec.*, 1868.

Dear and Illustrious Co-Godparent,

Thank you once again on my own account and on behalf of my children and my grandchildren and our friends whose hearts you have taken by storm. All day long we heard nothing but; "How handsome he is! How kind! Doesn't he say exactly the right thing? How simple and young and charming he is!" We

[1] Prince Jerome Napoleon.

did not contradict as you may well believe, and we love those who love you, all the better for it.

And we should love you better than ever if that were possible for this striking proof of your friendship which you have bestowed upon us, which will be such a precious memory in the family present and to come. Aurore will be particularly proud of it, and will I am sure deserve this patronage, which you have accorded so cordially and bestowed so graciously. She is always kissing her hand to your portrait and has privileged herself to "thee and thou" it.

We hope that you arrived at home without undue fatigue and that nothing will come of that little indication of fever which you spoke of to the young doctor, though not to us. You will come back some day and visit us again, will you not? You said it gave you pleasure to be at Nohant once more, but one thing is certain and that is, that you left behind an impression of happiness and affection which is not to be effaced.

Yours with all our hearts,

MAURICE
LINA
and
G. SAND.

TO MADAME EDMOND ADAM

(Juliette Lamber now married to Adam)

Nohant, 20 *Dec.*, 1868.

DEAR CHILD,

I have not had an instant before to answer your letter. Nohant has been simply upside down with the celebration of our "spiritual" baptism; I do not want to dwell on the word Protestant too strongly, although the primary meaning of the word has much meaning in our case and with all that, I have had to be

finishing off an immense bit of work. We have had a great deal of fun and now we must calm down, but I shall have to go up to Paris soon to arrange about getting something out of my scratches of ink on paper, and I do not think I shall have time to go and salute the sun in the South this year. If I can snatch a few days of liberty it would only be to rush down in the first place to see you, and, in the second, to see the Cornice, and then straight home again. So you may dispose of the lovely Villa du Pin and if you take my advice you will not make it a free home for babies and wet nurses.

At the same time a thousand thanks from myself and my children for the really too gracious offer. It will be some time yet before Lina can carry off her little ones so far, or leave the home which is vital to them at present.

We can only contemplate expeditions, one at a time, and then, our work lies heavy upon us as usual and no doubt there is good in that, although it curtails our liberty, as we have no time to wrangle or quarrel.

You have now reached a very peaceful haven. I hope that it will completely cure your nerves and that you will do some work entirely to your satisfaction. I have not yet re-read your book. It has been simply impossible. But the hour will come. As you know I shall do it conscientiously and I shall really tell you what impression it makes on me as one always does to those whom one loves. We all send you our tender greetings. You will soon be seeing our dear fat old Planchut, whom we are keeping as long as possible, and he will tell you all about our festive doings. With all my heart, yours, Adam's, and lovely Toto's,

GEORGE SAND.

TO FLAUBERT

Nohant, 21 *December*, 1868.

I certainly am sulking and bearing you a grudge, not because I am selfish or exacting, but on the contrary, because we have been joyous and *hilarious* and you would not join in with us. If you had been enjoying yourself elsewhere you would have been forgiven in advance; but as you only stayed at home to cloister yourself and consume your vitality for a bit of work that you are always cursing into the bargain, and which—(wanting to do it and obliged to do it any way)—you ought to want to accomplish at your ease, and without being absolutely drowned in it. You tell me that you are like that. Then there is nothing to be said, but one may well be rather sorry to have a friend whom one adores chained, past all deliverance, far away from oneself. It is perhaps a bit of coquetry on your part in order to get yourself pitied, and even more loved. I am not buried alive in literature so I lived fully and laughed much during our festival days, but thought a great deal of you and talked about you a great deal with the friend from the Palais-Royal who would have been glad to see you, and would have liked and appreciated you very much.

Tourgenief was more fortunate than me, since he was able to tear you from your inkpot. I know him personally only a very little, but I know his books by heart. What a talent! And what an absolute original! I think foreign writers have a better way with them than we have. They never pose and we either drape ourselves with our dignity, or make an exhibition of ourselves. The Frenchman has neither a social nor an intellectual circle nowadays.

I except you, who live an exceptional life, and I except myself because of the stratum of gipsy insouciance in the depths of my being which has been bestowed on me. But then I admit that I cannot

polish and repolish my work; *I love life too much and am too much occupied with the mustard and pickles of life, as opposed to the solid fare, ever to be a real woman of letters.* I have had fits of it certainly; but it has not lasted. Existence in which one can drown one's ego and forget all about it, is so very good, and life in which one is not playing any part is such a jolly play to see! When I *have* to give out my personal force, I live on courage and resolution, but I do not enjoy the process.

As for you, crazy troubadour, I suspect you of caring more for the writer's trade than for anything else in the world. In spite of what you say, it might well be true that *art* is your only passion, and that your monastic life, which always touches my heart, fool that I am, is your idea of bliss. If that is so, all the better, but admit it to console me. I must leave off writing to go and dress the marionettes, for with the return of bad weather we have gone back to our games and laughter and shall be at it for a good part of the winter I suppose. That is the sort of imbecile whom you love and call *maitre*. *Maitre* indeed, when I would much rather idle than work!

Despise me deeply if you like, but love me always. Lina asks me to say that you are nothing much after all and Maurice is furious too, but we love you in spite of yourself and send you kisses all the same. Our friend Plauchut wishes to be recalled to your memory. He adores you too.

Yours always, ungrateful creature!

G. Sand.

I read the Figaro's latest whopping lie! And I laughed heartily. Grotesque proportions for anything concerned with me as usual. The papers have credited me with a grandson instead of the two little girls and a Catholic instead of a Protestant baptism. What does it matter? *It seems that the public cannot be amused without lies.*

TO ARMAND BARBÈS

Nohant, 2nd January, 1869.

My Dear Good Friend,

How kind of you not to forget the New Year. Our thoughts crossed for I was just going to write to you. No, Aurore has no little brother, there are only two little girls. The eldest is three and the baby is nine or ten months old. Both have just been baptised as Protestants; it is the news of the christening which has set about the idea of a new baby. The brother will arrive someday perhaps, but there is no indication of the date at present.[1] As for the Protestant baptism it is not an engagement to belong to an orthodox branch of a human institution, but my son's idea is to *protest* against Catholicism, to enact a public divorce of the family from the Catholic Church, a declared and determined rupture with the Roman priest. He and his wife had foreseen that we might all be dead before their daughters were safely settled in life, and they considered it necessary to furnish them with a protective seal, *in so far as it is* possible, against human villainy.

I have no wish for the existence of any cult in the future either protected or persecuted, I wish for absolute liberty of conscience, and I cannot conceive of any exterior forms of worship for the philosopher at present. But I admit that I do not go in for forms in any direction, and as my children are acting from good rational impulses I have associated myself with them most willingly. Our family life is a very happy one and we live in complete concord. Maurice is such an excellent being; he has a very cultured mind and a heart at once independent and faithful. He will always remember the tender kindness of your welcome to him in Paris with emotion. What a long time ago that seems and what progress have we made in history

[1] The first child of Maurice and Lina Sand was a boy, who died aged one year.

since then? None whatever! In fact historically speaking it seems as if we had slid back some fifty years or so. But history only registers the visible and the tangible. It is too realistic a study to be of any comfort to souls. I believe that we *are* advancing all the time and that our sufferings serve where actions would be useless.

I am not such a politician as you, and I really do not know whether or no we are menaced by the foreigner. *What I do know is that one hour of Truth, acquired somehow for the human race, would melt away all armies, like snow before the sun.* But you say that you personally still feel bellicose. All the better, as it shows that your soul is still strong in your suffering body in spite of everything. We love you and embrace you tenderly.

GEORGE SAND.

TO FLAUBERT

Nohant, 17 January, 1869.

The individual called George Sand is in very good health; she is enjoying the marvellous winter which is reigning in Berry and is gathering flowers, noting down interesting botanical anomalies; makes dresses and coats for her daughter-in-law, costumes for marionettes, cuts out stage-scenery, dresses dolls, reads music, but above all she spends hours with her little Aurore, who is an astonishing child. There is no living being more peaceful and happy at home than your old troubadour, retired from business now, but singing a little romance by moonshine, from time to time, without caring very much whether she sings well or ill as long as she can get out the *motif* which is active in her brain, and all the rest of the time she loiters about deliciously. It was not always so. Once she was foolish enough to be young, but as she never

did any harm then, nor indulged in evil passions, nor lived vainly for vanity's sake, she now has the joy of peace, and the capability of enjoying everything.

This faded personality of mine has plenty of leisure to love you with all her heart, and she never lets a day pass without thinking of the other old troubadour confined to the solitude of the raving artist, disdainful of all the joys of this world, bored by leisure and its many joys. As workers, I feel that we are at opposite poles, but as we find it possible to love each other just the same, all is well. As we often seem to be thinking of each other at the same times, it must be because we feel the need of our opposite, the need of completing ourselves by identifying ourselves at moments with something unlike ourselves.

I think I told you that I had been planning out a play on the return journey from Paris. They approve of it, but I do not want them to produce it in the spring and the end of their winter season is full up, unless the play they are rehearsing now, should be a failure. As I find it impossible to wish defeat for my brother-writers I am in no hurry and my manuscript is on the shelf. I have plenty of time. I can produce one little romance every year if I can get two hours a day to work at it; I am not displeased to be withheld from thinking of it for a time. That gives it time to ripen. I always get a little time before I go to sleep, to continue it in my head, and so that is how I manage.

I know nothing at all about the Sainte-Beuve incident. I receive dozens of newspapers, but I am so respectful to the wrappers, that if it were not for Lina who tells me the chief news from time to time, I should not know whether Isadore were still in this world or not. Sainte-Beuve has an extremely fiery temper and is such a complete sceptic in all his opinions that I should never be surprised *whatever* he did. He was not always like that, at any rate not to that degree, I have known him more of a believer and more

republican than he has been latterly. He used to be thin, pale and gentle; how we all change! His talent, his knowledge and his mind have increased immensely, but I used to like his character better in the old days. All the same there is still plenty of good in him. There is the love and respect for literature and he is the last of the critics. The real critic as we know him is vanishing fast. Perhaps there is no more need of him. What do you think? Good-night, my troubadour. I love you and hug you warmly. So does Maurice.

GEORGE SAND.

TO FLAUBERT

Nohant, 24th Feb., 1869.

I am all alone at Nohant as you are all alone at Croisset. Maurice and Lina have gone off to Milan to see Calamatta who is dangerously ill. If they should have the sorrow of losing him they will have to go to Rome to liquidate his affairs. Worry always follows on the heels of grief! This sudden separation has been a very sad one, my poor Lina was crying at leaving her children and crying because she was not with her father. The children have been left in my charge and I hardly ever leave them so that I can only work when they are asleep, but I am quite glad to have the care of them to console me. I get news telegraphed from Milan in two hours, every day. The patient is better. My children will only reach Turin to-day and do not yet know what I know, here. How this telegraphy has changed one's ideas of life and when the formulas and formalities are still further simplified how full of facts and how thoroughly disembarrassed of uncertainties, life will be.

Aurore, who simply lives in one adoration or another, on the knees of either father or mother, and

cries every day when I am away, has not once asked where they are. She plays, and laughs as usual and then suddenly stops . . . her great beautiful eyes become fixed and she says: "Father?" Another time she said: "Maman?" I distract her attention and she thinks no more about it, but she comes back to her questioning again. Children are very mysterious. It is evident that they can think without understanding. It would only need one sad word to crystallise her sorrow. She is bearing it within, without knowing it. She looks into my eyes to see whether I am sad or anxious, and as I laugh she laughs. I think we ought to keep her sensibility dormant as long as possible, and I believe she would never cry when I am away if they did not talk about me. You have brought up a charming and intelligent niece, so what is your opinion? Is it right to make them loving and soft-hearted at an early age? I used to think so. I was very much disturbed when I saw that Maurice was too impressionable and Solange too hard, and that they reacted on one another. I do wish that people would only show small children the good and beautiful things of life until reason is sufficiently developed to help them to accept or combat evil. What do you think?

I embrace you and want you to tell me when you are going to Paris, as my journey is delayed, for my children may be away for a month, so that we may find ourselves in Paris at the same time.

Your old solitary.

TO DUMAS FILS

Nohant, 12th March, 1869.

To die in one's sleep, without suffering, is surely the best death and that is how Calamatta died. Apoplexy carried him off on the top of another illness, more

serious than he was aware of, which had given him no pain. My children are coming home. Maurice is quite right to bring my poor Lina back to her little girls at once. By sheer force of Nature she is bound to be happy when she sees them.

To die in that way is not to die, it is simply to undergo a change of state. As I do not believe in death I say: "What matter soon or late?" But though the departure may leave the dying indifferent, it often makes a cruel change in the lives of those left behind, and I do not want those I love to die before me, for I live in readiness to go, and I shall complain of nothing here as long as my brain is active. The only infirmities I fear, are those which leave a useless life as a burden on those who must care for it.

Calamatta who had kept himself extraordinarily young and active at the age of sixty-nine also feared infirmity to the point of helplessness, worse than death. Recently he had been threatened with paralysis. If he had been given his choice he would have chosen just what destiny sent him. It would be my choice to live through a few years in which I might have leisure to write for myself and my own friends. I should need a publisher who would make me an annual allowance of sixty thousand francs to provide for all my wants, but I shall never be able to find him and I shall die at the tread-mill. I console myself by saying that very likely the work I did produce would not be worth the trouble of writing it. Never mind that! If you can find such a publisher for me next year, drag him to me by the hair of his head.

You have been mapping out an ideal of happiness for yourself, which you could realise tomorrow it seems to me if you wished. But you do not wish to and you are right.

The only real good in life is in facing the difficulties which seem to be the negation of life; we are

worthless from the first day that we begin to consider nothing but the preservation of personal happiness.

It is most exhausting, is it not, to love one's friends? Would it not be far more convenient to refuse to put oneself out for anybody? Never to go and nurse people, or to bury them, or to comfort them, or to help them? Would it not be better to feel nothing of their sorrows? Try it! It cannot be done. Good-bye dear son. I love you. *And love is the meaning of life.*

TO LOUIS ULBACH

Nohant, 26 November, 1869.

Dear and Illustrious Friend,

I am at Nohant, eight hours from Paris by railway. Is that too far for the time at your disposal? You leave Paris about nine in the morning and dine at Nohant at seven. You can of course leave next morning but if you stay another day you will avoid fatigue and we shall have time for a real talk. If you cannot manage it, we shall be very sorry for it would be a great joy to my children and to me to welcome you and your Cloche,[1] which rings so loudly, without ceasing to be a lovely instrument and without disseminating slander and gossip.

I shall go to Paris in the course of the winter, in January or February. If you cannot wait for that, turn up the first forty years of my life in my own *Histoire de ma Vie*. Levy will send you the volumes at once if you ask him for them.

It is a true history. There are many negligible details but by going through the book you will get all the *facts* of my life accurately. The last twenty-five years contain nothing interesting. It has been just

[1] A journal edited by Louis Ulbach.

going downhill towards age, calm and happy in my family life, which has been traversed by entirely personal sorrows, deaths and defections, and then the general condition of modern life in which you and I must have suffered from the same things. I will answer any questions that you care to ask, but it would be better if we could do it in conversation. I had to lose two beloved grand-children: my daughter's little daughter and son's little son. There are still left two charming little girls born of his very happy marriage. My daughter-in-law is almost as dear to me as he is. I have given up the reins of management here to them. My time is spent in amusing the children, in botanising a little in the summer, in taking long walks (I am still a noted pedestrian) and in writing novels, when I can find two hours in the morning and two hours at night to give to it.

I write with pleasure and with great facility; it is my recreation; but my correspondence is enormous; that is work if you like! If it were only a question of letters to friends! But the appeals from strangers are both touching and absurd I can tell you! If I can do nothing I do not answer. But some petitioners seem to deserve an effort, even with small hope of success. Then, one must answer that one will do one's best. All this with personal affairs thrown in, for they must be attended to sometimes, means about ten letters a day. It is a scourge. But who is without a scourge?

After my death I hope to go to a planet where there is no reading or writing. One would have to be perfect indeed to be in no need of either. In the meantime we must do otherwise on this planet! If you want to know anything about my material position it is easy to establish. My accounts are clearly kept. I must have earned at least a million francs by my writing, but I have never saved a

halfpenny: I have given it all away, except twenty thousand francs which I invested the other day so that my children should not have to spend too much on broths and medicines if I should fall ill. And yet I am not sure of being able to hang on to that capital for there are people who need help and if I keep well enough to be able to replace it, that will have to go. Keep the secret for me so that I may keep my savings as long as possible.

If you are moved to discuss my financial position you can truthfully say that I have always lived from hand to mouth on the fruits of my toil and that I think it quite the happiest way of living. One has no bothers in looking after investments, and no need to go in fear of robbers!

Since my children have taken over the management here I have had time to make some little excursions in France every year; for the inner recesses of France are little known, and they are quite as beautiful as the places people make long journeys to visit. Thus I find the settings for my novels. I like to have seen what I describe. That simplifies the question of study and research. If I only have three words to write upon a locality, I like to be able to look at it in my memory and to be as accurate as possible.

All this seems very banal, dear friend, and when one is applied to, by a biographer like you, one longs to be as great and striking as a pyramid to deserve the honour of occupying his attention.

But I cannot hoist myself up. I am only a plain simple woman who has been credited with ferocities of character which are altogether fantastic! Among a mass of contradictory accusations I have been accused of having been incapable of passionate love! It seems to me that I have lived by loving; surely people can be content with that!

Nowadays, thank God, nothing more is demanded of me, and those who are good enough to love me in

spite of my undazzling life and mind seem to be satisfied with me.

I have remained very cheerful in disposition, lacking any gift of amusing people, but knowing how to help them to amuse themselves.

I expect I have big faults, but I am just like other people and do not see them myself. Neither do I know whether I have any good qualities. I have given my mind a great deal to the search for *truth*, and in that search the feeling for the *ego* becomes daily fainter and fainter. You must know that from your own case. If one does good one does not applaud oneself, it seems to have been logical behaviour, that is all. If one does ill, it has been because one did not know one was doing it. If one had been truly enlightened one would never have done it. If only everyone would tend to think in that way. I do not believe in evil but I do believe in ignorance . . . or stupidity . . .

Then ring the Bell, dear friend, and drown the voice of falsehood, force all ears to listen to the truth!

Your Life of Napoleon III is an entrancing bit of work. Oh! that we had already arrived at that age of sweetness and wisdom when functions would be duties and when ambition would make all decent people laugh, from one end of the world to the other.

Yours from my heart, very tenderly and fraternally.

GEORGE SAND.

TO VICTOR HUGO

Paris, 2nd February, 1870

MY ILLUSTRIOUS FRIEND,

I have just come from a performance of *Lucrèce Borgia* with my heart filled with emotion and joy Those poignant scenes still vividly fill my thoughts.

with seductive or terrifying lines and the memory of Alfonzo d'Este's bitter smile, and the terror-striking arrest of Gennaro, the cry of the mother, Lucrèce; I can still hear the acclamations of the packed audience shouting: "Vive Victor Hugo!" calling you alas! as if you could hear, as if you were going to appear.

In speaking of a consecrated work like *Lucrèce Borgia* one cannot say merely "it was an immense success!" but I should say: "you have had a magnificent triumph!"

Your friends on the staff of the *Rappel*, who are also friends of mine asked me whether I wanted to be the first to give you the news of this triumph. I should think I did wish it! Then, may this letter of mine bring you some echo of that brilliant night, dear absent friend.

That night recalls another to me, not less brilliant. You did not know that I attended the first performance of *Lucrèce Borgia*, they tell me it is thirty-seven years ago, to a day.

I remember that I was sitting in the gallery and that chance had placed me next to Bocage whom I met for the first time that night. We were strangers to one another, but our common enthusiasm made us friends at once. We applauded together simultaneously, the same words came to our lips: "is it not beautiful?"

During the intervals we simply could not help talking to each other in ecstasy, and recalling this scene or that passage to one another. In those days there was a passion and conviction in literary art which made brothers and twin-souls of us fellow-craftsmen. At the end of the drama when the curtain falls on the tragic cry: "I am your mother!" we caught hold of each other's hands. He and I lived in that same fraternal friendship up to the day of that great artist's and dear friend's death. To-day *Lucrèce Borgia* seemed

just as I felt it that night. It had not aged a single day; it has not a crease or a wrinkle. That beautiful form as clear-cut and firm as though it were carved in Parian marble, has remained absolutely pure and intact.

TO MICHEL LÉVY

(A Paris publisher)

Nohant, 20th April, 1870.

DEAR FRIEND,

My handwriting again! As everybody knows that we are good friends, everybody tries to get at you through me! I have sent you a novel by Madame Blanc, and I do wish you could see your way to publishing it.

Now Flaubert has written to me that he has a few debts to pay and that he cannot make up his mind to ask you for money, I do not know why, as you have always treated him so well and you have never refused a balance of payment, or an advance when he has been in need of it.

I do not know how your agreement stands with him but I see that you would be doing him a great service by taking or sending him enough money to set him on his feet again, since he is too proud to ask for himself. He is *splenetic* for the moment. After Bouilhot's death, he lost an equally valuable friend, a second Bouilhot, and all that has thrown him into bad health and his letters are sad. I think if his financial outlook were improved it would help him to get the upper hand.

Yours from my heart.

GEORGE SAND.

MICHEL LÉVY'S ANSWER TO GEORGE SAND

Paris, 9 May, 1870.

DEAR MADAME SAND,

To prove the sincerity of my desire of obliging you I have taken the steps with regard to Flaubert that you advised when describing his financial position and his depressed condition.

I thought I had discovered the means of helping him without making him feel too much obliged to be grateful, without alarming his amour-propre when I proposed an advance of four or five thousand francs upon the next work he may produce at his own time. be it in five years or ten. I regret to have to tell you that my proposal has not succeeded in winning his approval, although it is absolutely disinterested on my part and would have contributed to his peace of mind.

As for offering him a premium on *L'Education Sentimentale* it was really not in my power. Although this book has been very far from a success it must have brought in 16,000 francs to Flaubert, when to you, Renan or Guizot I should have paid 6,000 francs at the most. I may add that it is certain that I shall not recover the 16,000 francs already disbursed in the ten years during which I hold the copyright of *L'Education Sentimentale.*

I regret that Flaubert did not feel that he could accept my offer, but I have done what I could, and I hope you yourself will do me the justice to admit that I could not have done more.

All this is strictly between ourselves. You can well understand that I could not put matters so crudely to Flaubert himself.

Very affectionately yours,

MICHEL LÉVY.

TO JULIETTE ADAM

Nohant, 14th July, 1870.

Thank kind Adam for his telegram. The post-offices are so much encumbered with these sad messages that his only came to us with the post and did not reach la Chatre any faster than the letters.

Planchut writes that Paris is *roaring* with enthusiasm. It is not the same thing in the country by any means. Everyone is reduced to consternation; they are not to be imposed upon, they cannot see it as a question in which our national honour is involved, but only as a stupid and odious desire to play with guns![1] Parents are trembling for their children and the young men themselves are not supported by the feeling that their country is in danger.

To sing the Marseillaise to an Empire tune seems a sacrilege to us. Well! We shall see, but I cannot augur favourably for the drama which is preparing and as I see it, it is a retrograde step. Of course the peasants who can no longer afford to feed their beasts, and are selling them advantageously to the army, think it is all for the best without considering that they will return their gains to the State in taxes and in the shedding of their own blood.

I must own that I am very sad and that this time my old passion for the drum refuses to be awakened. The republicans who pile mistake upon mistake have urged their government into an excess of susceptibility which will do its business but lose their cause. Everyone seems to be going mad. People must take a line of their own and swallow the draught of decadence down to the dregs. When the cup is empty it can be refilled with a new wine I have no doubt. I am not really afraid for the future but the present looks very ugly and one must find the courage to go through with it, without blaspheming.

[1] She is referring to the outbreak of the Franco-Prussian War.

Yours was a very short visit my dear friends; we hardly saw you and we are therefore left with more regrets than memories. You do not tell me what sort of a journey you had and whether dear Séchan was not too tired. And that fragile flower Toto, did she sleep all right on the way? We all embrace you very tenderly. Clerh is grateful for your kind message. Write soon and come again soon.

G. Sand.

TO MADEMOISELLE LEROYER DE CHANTEPIE

Nohant, 30 *July*, 1870.

I am so much in sympathy with all your griefs and I will not relate my own. I have no right to, since I have a family and domestic happiness which compensates for the cruellest of losses. Yet I had to lose grandchildren and my sufferings then were atrocious, as one has to bear a double torment, one's own grief and one's children's. One has to struggle to conquer it just so long as it lasts and whenever it comes back. Old age simply lives in the possession of grandchildren but even so life is spent in trembling for them; therefore we must conclude that there is no repose or serene joy in this world and that no one is able to dispense with great courage in accepting the mission of loving and suffering and devoting oneself without ever relaxing from it. You have lived by devotion to others and will continue to do so. Friendship has repaid you for your labours and you have been able to repay the ungrateful with forgiveness. You will always find good deeds to do, misery to relieve, and poor faltering creatures to support. You will support your own soul with your own benevolence and indeed your life will not have been sterile. You will be given your reward in eternity when you will

be born again. In what form I cannot tell, but it may be a better one and you will certainly be happier. Do have confidence and believe in your own deserts, never believe that you are undeserving. Believe also in the very devoted affection which I feel for you.

GEORGE SAND.

TO FLAUBERT

Nohant, 8 *August*, 1870.

Are you in Paris in the middle of all this torment? What a lesson for the people who want absolute rulers! France and Prussia are cutting each other's throats over questions which they do not understand. Here we are, in for great disasters and what tears must be shed at the end of it all, even if we come out conquerors. Everywhere about here we see nothing but poor peasants weeping over their sons' departure!

The mobilisation is rapidly carrying off any men who still remained to us and what sort of treatment do they get at first? What disorder and confusion in the military administration which will swallow them up! Will this horrible experience at last prove to the world that war must be suppressed or civilisation will perish?

This evening our news here is that we have been defeated; perhaps tomorrow we shall hear that we have been victorious and what will come of either, that is good or useful, I should like to know?

We have had rain at last with an appalling storm which has shattered everything.

The peasant works his fields, digging day in day out, whether sad or gay! Some people say it is because he is stupid and does not realise what is going on, but it is not that, it is simply that he is a child in prosperity, a man in disaster, more of a man than we

who pity him. He says nothing and while this meaningless slaughter is going on, he tills the earth repairing the wastage that war is bringing in its wake.

We are trying to follow his example and we have set about finding a good water supply, some spring fifty or a hundred metres underground. The engineer has arrived and Maurice is giving him all information as to the geology of the soil. We are burrowing into the bowels of the earth in our effort to forget what is going on on the surface. But there is no possibility of distracting oneself from the general consternation.

Write where you are now. I am sending this for the date you gave me for rue Murillo.

We all love and embrace you.

TO HENRY HARRIS

Nohant, 13 *August*, 1870.

DEAR FRIEND,

You must be able to guess what I think. I am miserable but not in despair. It is entirely useless for us to exchange reflections upon these terrible events, for they must be identical, but I must tell you what you are quite ignorant of in Paris, I must tell you what is happening in our pastoral land which is the most peaceful and patient and the least revolutionary of France, on account of its central position and the scarcity of lines of rapid communication. Well! it is simply absolute consternation, hatred and fury against the Government which has almost dazed me!

I think the Empire is lost—absolutely done for. The same men who voted for it with confidence would vote for its downfall with absolute unanimity. The men who are joining the army are going with rage in their souls. To be forced to rejoin after having served his time is a frightful iniquity in the eyes of the

peasant, who has gone back to his plough. They say that they have been betrayed, delivered up to the enemy in advance, and abandoned without a chance of rescue. And there are not a few who say: "the first bullet I discharge will be for him!" They do not mean it because they are fine soldiers; they will fight like the very devil, but from a sense of honour and not from hatred of the Prussians whom they consider to have been provoked with a folly which reaches the point of madness.

Alas! No! I cannot recognise in this the old enthusiasm which belonged to the battles of the Republic. There is nothing now but suspicion, and disaffection, and resolution to punish, through the next vote. If the whole of France comes to feel in that way it will mean Revolution, and if it be not terrible, which God forbid! it will certainly be absolute, radical. You say that Paris is rejoicing in the change of ministry. It is not so here, for our people have no more faith in those who are coming in than in the out-going men.

That is how we stand, here. My little circle does its best to appease, but we cannot help pitying this kind peaceful population which is being decimated and exasperated when it has cheerfully offered up many sacrifices to make France strong in peace. And all this heaped upon the disaster of a bad harvest! Send me some news. Friendly greetings from us all.

G. Sand.

I do not speak of my personal sorrows. Two of my great-nephews whom I regard as grandsons have got to go.

TO PRINCE JEROME

(In Camp at Chalons)

Nohant, 18 *August*, 1870.

My Friend,

Maurice was very anxious to go to you this evening. He is in a state of extreme agitation like all of us. If you were in Paris, he would go to you at once but I have prevented him from starting, because I tell him that he would only be in the way if he joins you at your present post; and perhaps would only sadden you in the midst of your intense preoccupation. I can very well write what he feels that it is urgent that he should tell you. Indeed it would be easier and quicker. I feel that it is useless because you know it all better than we do, but true friends ought to speak out all the same.

Whatever may be the fate of our arms, and I hope that they will triumph, the Empire is finished unless it is to be supported by violence, if that is possible even. I am abstaining here from any reasoning on the matter, I just tell you the fact as I see it. There is complete disaffection, fury and despair in the hearts of the men who voted for it. Those who did not vote are the more moderate now. They say that they foresaw this war. The others who never expected it for a moment, and voted from fear of other trouble now find their peace, their family affections and their interests betrayed. They foresee a monstrous increase of taxes coming upon the heels of a disastrous year. That is what the country districts think.

In Paris I know it is even worse, for they know there that nothing was prepared for war and it is regarded as a crime that the Government did not avert it, or at least delay it, at any price. I do not tell you my personal opinion: I have none, not knowing whether the necessity to fight was absolute,

but I must tell you that I do believe the Emperor would risk more by going into Paris than by facing the Prussians.

What are you going to do yourself? You will face the enemy so long as need be I know, but afterwards, what? I do not ask you to answer me for I am not asking out of curiosity. I want you to answer yourself, but you ought to be made aware that the Republic is coming to life again and that nothing can prevent it, whether practicable or not, the idea of it is in every mind, even if the new form of government should be called by a new name, Heaven knows what, it does not matter.

I wish that once the claims of duty to your family have been satisfied, you could reserve yourself I will not say as a *claimant* to rulership (you do not desire it any more than I do for you are republican in the fibre of your being) but reserve yourself to live as a real citizen of a social state which needs enlightenment, eloquence and probity. A man like you has a great part to play in the future whatever the future may be, but he will only achieve it on condition of not compromising himself for that future more than is absolutely necessary at the moment, for the sake of ideas which are not his own convictions.

Whatever happens, we love, and shall love you.

GEORGE SAND.

TO JULIETTE ADAM

Nohant, 18 *August*, 1870.

I do not find it easy to decide on my point of view. I cannot see liberty springing out of an invasion. If we are defeated, it is not the King of Prussia and the diplomats of other sovereigns who will give us liberty—and we shall be beaten. You have only to

consider the impossible condition of our forces to be sure of it! The day is long past when one could fight with sticks and scythes. And then Paris, frivolous and warm in temperament is utterly at variance with the cold gloom of the provinces.

Everyone must feel the unpopular aspect of this war even if the reason is not understood. If we do beat back the Prussians we shall only manage it under a military dictatorship, and then how should we get rid of that afterwards. So I am seeing everything black, and the more I aspire to liberty, the less I hope for it.

May I be mistaken!

There is nothing but consternation here. There is not the smallest enthusiasm for enrolling. The terrible disorder which reigns everywhere inspires distrust; men are not afraid of fighting, but they are afraid of being sacrificed in vain and of dying of hunger and disease in the appalling confusion that they witness everywhere. There are troops mobilised for a fortnight now, at Bourges, and Chateauroux, who have to sleep under the sky and to beg for their food; if it were not for the brotherly kindness of the people round who help them, they would be worse off than at the battle-front. There is some talk of drilling the local national guard, but how? There is not a rifle to give them! It is not Bazami's fault I am sure, for the load that has been piled upon his shoulders is past all human bearing. If Paris would take a line of action we could all wake up perhaps. But can Paris take a line of action? Can one form a government when the enemy is at the gate? I am afraid of seeing things only too clearly! Tell me that I am wrong; it is possible. Write soon. We love and embrace you.

TO EDMOND PLANCHUT

Nohant, 26 *August*, 1870.

How are you? What is your news? We live in perpetual anxiety. Maurice is on fire; but what can he do? If there is no means of joining anywhere, of what use is the sporting rifle that we all hold in readiness? Must one get killed for having done nothing? It seems to me that the worst thing about the war is the abominable confusion and the lack of victuals and arms and of all necessities! I feel from the orders which are given here and elsewhere that the authorities are over-fearful of certain persons in Paris. Is it a measure of prudence in case of siege to keep all necessities there? Or is it the Government's own fear of seeing itself surrounded by too large a body of armed and discontented men? We live in perpetual doubt and lack of information, and get exhausted and dazed with guessing and commenting on things we really know nothing about. I suffer in silence but my sufferings are atrocious all the same.

In Paris you are better off, for you are organised and you are alive! Here the flat calm of the country and the silence of the fields instead of filling me with happiness as usual, simply irritates me to death, it is killing me!

Ah! if I had no family ties! Write to me dear child. What is Adam doing and saying? We embrace you tenderly. The children are well but their parents have lost their power of sleeping.

TO PLANCHUT

Nohant, *5th September*, 1870.

What a splendid event, what a day of glory in the midst of so many disasters! I never hoped for this victory of the cause of Liberty, without any resistance.

That is why I used to say "Do not stain the soil we want to defend, with blood!" But everything goes down before the great and true manifestations of life. Paris has at last risen as one man! That is what it ought to have done a fortnight ago. Then we should not have lost so many brave men. But it is done. *Vive Paris!* I embrace you with all my heart. We are all a little intoxicated here.

G. Sand.

TO JULIETTE ADAM

Nohant, 15th September, 1870.

I wonder whether you will ever receive this? I do not know! So you have been to see your daughter. We are in great anxiety for our children. Carbuncular small-pox has broken out in the village which adds a personal anguish to all those which already clutch at our hearts. Perhaps we shall go away to-morrow to take refuge in some other corner of Berry. Either Lina or I will go with the children. One of us must stay with Maurice who will be busy organising the national guard. We have been lifted to a generous exaltation of spirit by definite peril at your gates. We are saddened by this eternal waiting, but we are not in despair. Every day has its own special trouble and fear. We have trained ourselves to be always afoot and alive by force of will. We embrace you tenderly.

George Sand.

TO FLAUBERT

La Châtre, 11 *October*, 1870.

We are living at La Châtre. Nohant is ravaged by a dreadful complicated form of small-pox. So we thought it right to take the little ones away into La

Creuse, to some friends who came to fetch us and there we spent three weeks trying in vain to find a possible refuge for the family for the next three months. We have been offered hospitality in the South, but we did not want to leave our own district, where one day or another we may be called upon to make ourselves useful, although we cannot see yet what line it would be best to take. So we have come back as near as we can to our abandoned hearth and we are awaiting developments. To enlarge upon all the perils and troubles of the establishment of the Republic in the depths of our province would be quite useless. There can be no more illusions, we are playing our all for all, and we may yet end in *Orleanism*. But we are so much at the mercy of the unforeseen that it has become quite puerile to attempt to foresee; the main point is to escape the most pressing disaster. Do not say that is impossible. Do not think so. Do not despair of France. She is going through punishment for the crimes of her dementia and she will be born anew in some shape or form. Perhaps the great upheaval attendant on it may carry some of us off. To die whether of pneumonia or a bullet is just death anyway: what matter how you go? But it is essential to go without cursing one's race.

We love and embrace you always.

TO PRINCE JEROME

(living in Switzerland)

Nohant, 30th December, 1870.

My Dear Great Friend,

I want to send you a greeting for New Year's Day whatever happens! In spite of all the catastrophes, griefs and fatalities which made 1870 a terrible date in our lives, I want to go on hoping and believing that

we shall not be so unhappy in 1871. Besides affection alway gives birth to sincere good wishes, which though they cannot guarantee efficaciousness always bear witness to the faithful solicitude which inspires them.

You tell me that your personal consolation is derived from having become a free citizen once more; I can understand that and I foresaw that it would be so. In France we do not enjoy that compensation for we are ground between the mill-stones of foreign oppression and home dictatorship. I suppose as things are, this dictatorship was inevitable, but if some sort of constitution had been framed the dictatorship might have been limited by some legal restraint and would therefore have been less rigorous in action.

But who knows what such an assembly might not have foisted upon us? Did the improvised representatives of the Republic really think that they were the only people who could save the country? They were liable to human error like other people; one does not feel well disposed to opinions that are forced upon one and one is always more patriotic when not obliged to be. Only I do not think they could have assumed their task and responsibility solely to satisfy their own ambition; that would have been too bad a calculation, for then they would lose the very first election that could be held. Immediately after Sedan they would have had a chance; now after what they have suffered, the masses, which have been governed by their interests will simply curse them whatever the issue of the war may be. The people will always believe that the war could have been averted or better conducted. Who can say that it might not?

It is impossible to judge yet. It will need time and a long and difficult enquiry to consolidate the judgment that will go down in history of all these marches and countermarches, of orders well or badly delivered,

of various measures taken which turned out either useful or fatal. Every locality will have a history of its own part in the war, each combat will have its particular chronicle ; there were many cases of heroism and only too many of mystery and confusion. The Frenchman is always brave, even those who broke the ranks because they were raw soldiers unused to facing the fire ; when they were brought back to the line they were all the more formidable. In any case it does not seem to me that the game is lost. Paris is admirable and Chauzy is performing marvels of gallantry and constancy. Let us hope that France will yet save herself through her own vitality. As for the future there is nothing but mystery ahead, and the wisest conjectures will probably be proved wrong as they have been before.

The Legitimist party is putting itself forward into the public eye and specimens of the *chic* aristocrat are by no means extinct in the country. The red republic has partially returned to pure patriotism. The moderate republicans who have the upper hand at present are far too Catholic. Really God only knows what we shall arrive at! Here thrown on to our own resources in the heart of France without Paris-Boussole we are afraid to trust our own judgment since the facts escape us and are so badly reported. Do write what you know and have seen. You have seen it all from above and you are sure to describe it well. Reserve your judgment, my friend, as to what is going on now and suspect any information you get until a new order is established.

It has been a tremendous battle split up into tiny episodes and there have been no communications to connect each scene of the complicated drama, a terrible drama, splendid and miserable in one breath, from which we shall only be able to extricate ourselves by magnificent heroism. If we do not, it is the end of the world. If Prussia triumphs Europe will be a slave.

The news I got a little while ago was good; we have been holding our own for several days. Dear friend we think a great deal about you in our solitude. We do not know how or when we shall see you again. We, in France, are imprisoned in our homes, all means of communication are so much blocked. There is certainly a great movement for the defence going on. Is it well conducted? We do not know.

Tell me if I and my little family could find anywhere to live cheaply on the banks of your lake at Aigle, or in one of the valleys which run down to it? Tell someone to find out for you. If we could find some vacant spot we should like to go and rest a little from so many cares; they tell me that Switzerland is encumbered with fugitives; is it true? We should be so happy if we could see you, if and when we leave France, and we certainly shall have to if condemned to live under either Prussians or Jesuits.

My daughter-in-law sends you most affectionate greetings and your god-daughter sends you kisses; she is always good and charming and does not forget you.

Yours always. Your old friend,

G. Sand.

TO CHARLES PONCY

Nohant, 17 *January*, 1871.

Maurice asks me to thank you for your verses which are charming and I thank you for those addressed to me, which are really very beautiful.

I wish I had been a poet, because at this particular date in history the prose produced does not seem worth writing. It is too argumentative and it falls into the very depths of flat realism. Besides which I have no heart for anything and live in fear and sorrow.

Poor Paris! It was half of my soul! There I

have had the opportunity of tasting civilisation in company with a few friends who appreciated it while criticising too. It was in Paris that we refreshed our imaginations in a life of individual liberty and stimulating laughter which is not to be found in any other part of the world. You have never known Paris. One must have belonged to it, one must have lived there after a certain fashion to be able to gauge the charm of one's relations with all classes of society there. I never wanted to stay long; the climate did not suit me at all and I am quite unable to exist separated from nature and deprived of the possibility of quiet retirement.

But during the last few years I have spent weeks there, which nothing could replace. All my dear friends are heroically defending the breaches now! Shall I ever see them again? Will even one of them be left to me? My little set of rooms, so clean and fresh they were, is at the very centre of the firing. Shall I ever go into them again? But that matters nothing so long as my friends are spared and honour triumphs. Ah! how one suffers and how long the days are!

We embrace you all tenderly my dear children. May your verses speak truly.

TO PLANCHUT

Nohant, 2nd February, 1871.

We love and cherish you, my friend, we respect you a hundred times more than before, for the moral courage which has sustained you through this terrible crisis; for your good temper, and interesting letters, and constant memory of us. What a fine friend you make and what an inestimable character you have. Do not feel sad about anything, for you have done your duty completely and the whole world, even the

nation in arms against us, renders you homage and justice. Misfortune does not leave a stain, and if France is stricken down into blood she is not lying in mud. I am writing just as I think and though I have to post my letter unfastened, by military command it does not trouble me in the least. I have nothing to say to anyone that I could not say to the whole world. What we have to do at present is to make peace, the best peace possible certainly, but we must not persist in war out of bad temper and the desire to wreak vengeance for our misfortunes. There will be much to say as to the causes of so many defeats; but this is not the moment to say them. I have not thought it advisable to publish a line against anything whatsoever; but I know that everything would have been better managed if we had had a regular government in the provinces. The country is claiming its rights and must be given them. It will vote wisely I hope; it will vote according to the principles of justice and humanity.

Write soon. I got your letter of the 17th and one from Harris soon after that, and this morning, one from Berton; his son is dangerously ill, poor boy! How I love you all my poor friends! How I desire peace! What a longing I feel to press you all to my heart which is torn, wounded with anxiety! We cannot sleep and we cannot eat without reproaching ourselves for having food when you have none. I am uneasy about Marchal, give me some news of him, anxious too about my poor Martine of whom you do not speak. And the Lamberts? You told me that they got away in time; but is not the child ill after his privations? How many innocents have perished of hardship and disease without taking bombs into account at all! Harris wrote to me all about your dinner at Magny, the day he received my letter. Give my friendly remembrances to good Magny, and to Madame Lambquin who is so good to the wounded

and to the devoted Sarah.[1] I am anxious about Clerh, he was ill at the beginning of the siege. And Reynaud? I saw his name in the papers, but what has happened to him since? And poor Baudois. And I must know whether poor Martine has any means of obtaining food. I hope she will have applied to Boutet. And Fréville? Dead of starvation perhaps? What a number of unfortunates without work and without means! Do give a little help on my behalf to those who are too proud to ask for it. I am wondering whether you are not stripped bare yourself.

Dip into my little purse so long as there is anything in it. Here we have *nothing* but taxes to spend our money on. See Boutet for me and tell him that I love them as ever and received their letter, and give me news of them. Let Cadol 16 rue de Laval know that his wife and child are well; that I have opened an account at a bank for them in Brussels. I hope that *the very moment* you are free yourself you will fly here to us.

TO FLAUBERT

Nohant, 4th February, 1871.

Do you not get my letters? Write me one word I beg. I am quite well; but we are so anxious. Everyone we know is safe in Paris. We embrace you.

TO ALICE LAMASSINE

(daughter of Juliette Adam)

Nohant, 22nd February, 1871.

My Darling,

I received a letter from your mother yesterday. She is at Bruyère. Adam has gone to Bordeaux. They

[1] Sarah Bernhardt.

are agitated, grieved and tormented but not ill. Adam has been nominated a deputy. You have probably heard all that from your mother. I do not doubt that peace will soon be signed and that you will soon be all re-united to console each other for the general misery. The hardships certainly are great but we shall come through them in the end. We must never lose courage. Your dear little mother will be so pleased with the progress you have made and I hope that your health is stronger too. If the war had broken out again, Lina and I had thoughts of joining you[1] with our little ones. Now I am looking forward to seeing you all at Nohant, where we shall all love each other so dearly that all troubles will be forgotten.

G. Sand.

TO JULIETTE ADAM

(at Gulf Juan)

Nohant, 23 February, 1871.

My Juliette,

You really must not let yourself break down. You must not give in to nerves, you must control your imagination which is the fatal motor power of nervous malady. It is quite enough to have a suffering heart and soul without adding to that an excitement dangerous to oneself and others. Calm yourself, my child, I wish it for your daughter's sake; she is not strong and she will simply not survive your intense sufferings. She is so longing to see you again! Do not let her be witness of crises which might prove contagious. Hers is not the nature of the Delphic priestess! She could not survive those exuberant frenzies, which seem to attract you though they exhaust you.

[1] Alice was in Jersey.

I have been fearfully worried about Adam.[1] I was reassured by the telegraph, very much reassured. For after having heard that he could not live I was told that his injury was very slight. I wrote three times to Plauchut to ask him to see that you were not anxious, and you must have been excessively so for my news cannot have arrived in time. The news is quite bad enough in reality as he is still far from well, but he will soon be all right and really he has been lucky.

This is not the moment for you to break down. He will want all your strength. Life is so hard for men at present, that women *owe it to them not* to add their fears to men's griefs. Employ yourself with getting better, resting and bringing your Alice back to you. I hope that Adam will not have started to Bordeaux as he heard that for the last week or ten days there has been nothing to do there. He is not of those who try to bring about civil war in order to preserve their own position. I hope he will leave those deluded people to ruin themselves after having ruined France. There are people far more guilty of that than the Prussians, and they are the men who have drained France of her strength without drawing on their own blood or money which have been so freely spent by Frenchmen of all opinions.

As for my poor Louis Blanc, one of the elect among the intellects of Paris, you will find him now in the clouds, a sophist riding an enormous Pegasus! We have all had *too much* to bear; it has falsified the strongest judgments and shaken the noblest minds!

We need the heavy hand of Jacques Bonhomme to keep us from cutting our throats now; let the ideal be put on one side now and let brutal common sense restrain us from national suicide. Let us patiently submit to laws fit for simple minds, since all the fever of great intelligence has not discovered better ones. We shall recover, and sooner than people think.

[1] Edmond Adam had been injured in a railway accident.

Give me some news of you, child, and promise me to be strong, which is better than being heroic. We embrace you tenderly. I am longing to hear that Alice is with you.

GEORGE SAND.

TO PRINCE JEROME

(at Prangins)

Nohant, 17 *March*, 1871.

Your letter to me was twelve days in the post. Letters come from Paris in four or five. We were better served by the Prussian postal service than we are now. I prefer to send my letters to you by Nyon as you have already received them by that route.

Yes, my great friend, a return to the narrow principles of Orleanism is indeed a possibility although M. Thiers seems determined to combat any excess, in this direction. But will he be able to ? The majority whom we have put into power in order to escape from the weak and foolish domination of a dictatorship, is a stupid and reactionary majority. I am not preparing myself to rejoice ! It will take ten years before a totally new party, as tired of one side as the other, can arise to *safeguard liberty* in the face of everything, and between this and then, liberty may well be juggled out of sight or goaded into anarchy. The prospects of what may happen are terrifying and sad beyond words I agree, and yet my poor bruised disabled heart will go on hoping.

I float on the foam wherever it may drift because I know that land exists and that every wave must break there. Truth and Goodness are not fictions ; it is enough to feel them alive within oneself to be certain that they exist in all human consciousness.

Who will give us those boons which seem to be part of every ideal and are so urgently needed by us that one day they *must* be made to pass into reality?

Well, I do not believe that any one man is capable of giving them to us until a certain moment arrives in the world's history when he finds himself in direct communication with the will of the majority. Any institution which can confide this power to an individual for life appears illusory and impossible to me. M. Thiers holds it for a quarter of an hour perhaps, and the enthusiasm that goes with it. In three months it will all be gone, and the Orleans if they do re-capture their royal power will not hold it for three years.

But what projects, what visions are to be based upon such a confusion of facts? Really the people of France are all more or less mad at the present moment. The disaster and the efforts to cope with it simply passed the limits of possible endurance.

But there has been greatness, and there has also been miserable smallness; my great consolation all through, has been to see and feel that France was better, wiser, and more devoted than those who undertook to guide and to judge her.

It is impossible that such a great nation should fall.

I was happy to see that you refuted the lies spread about you, without the smallest hesitation. Keep your soul high above that kind of tempest; it will regain its own rightful place in the days of our national recovery. You ask when we are coming to visit you in Switzerland. Up to now we had flattered ourselves that we should be able to seek change of air and circumstances outside France when the fine weather came. But people who owe us money have not paid up, our corn is frost-bitten and our pockets are empty. So Maurice and I are nailed to our work, at our desks and in the fields. I must write and he must till and sow. We shall get through it somehow but

one of the conditions will be that we must deprive ourselves of the rest we long for and the happiness of seeing you.

Write to us my dear friend when you have nothing better to do, you will thus send happiness to people who continue to love you tenderly.

TO FLAUBERT

Nohant, 28 *April*, 1871.

No, I am certainly not forgetting you but I am sad, sad; that is to say that I keep up a cheerful rattle, observe the advancing spring, busy myself and talk, as if nothing were the matter, but I have never been able to be alone for a few moments since that dismal adventure without falling into a black despair. I make great efforts to shake it off, I do not want to be discouraged, I do not want to abjure the past or to doubt the future, but it is my will, my reasoning power which now struggles against a deep impression which hitherto has been overwhelming. That is why I did not want to write to you before feeling better, not because I am ashamed of having these fits of depression, but because I did not want to increase your sadness which is already so heavy by adding the weight of mine.

To my mind the base experiment which Paris tried, or is trying, proves nothing against the laws of the eternal progression of men and things and if I have a few acquired principles in my being, whether good or bad ones they will neither be shaken nor modified. For a long time now I have accepted the necessity of patience, just as one accepts the time that patience lives through, the length of the winter, old age, failure in all its forms.

But I think that people with a side or party (who

are sincere about it) will be obliged to change their formulas or to acknowledge the emptiness of all formulas, *a priori*. It is not that which makes me sad. In the case of a dead tree, the only thing to do is to plant two more. My sorrow comes from a pure weakness of heart which I do not know how to conquer. I cannot go to sleep over the suffering, or even the ignominy of others. I pity those who do evil; while recognising that they are not in the least interesting, their moral condition rends my heart. One pities a young bird which has fallen out of its nest, how can one avoid pitying a mass of consciences which have fallen into the mud? Really, we suffered less from the Prussians during the siege! We loved Paris, unhappy in spite of herself; we are even more sorry for her to-day when we can no longer love her. Those who never loved her are now compensating themselves by a mortal hatred. What answer can one make? The contempt of France is perhaps the chastisement that Paris deserves for the arrant cowardice with which she submitted to the rising of these adventurers. It is a sequel to the adventure of the Empire: different felons but the same cowardice.

But I do not want to dwell on that, I am sure you have been groaning over it quite sufficiently. You must distract your mind from it, for if one thinks about it too much, one finds oneself, figuratively, detached from one's own limbs, and submitting to amputation with far too much stoicism.

You do not tell me in what condition you found your charming little home at Croisset. I know the Prussians occupied it. Did they smash, soil and steal? Did you find all your *bibelots* and books intact? Did the power of your name cause them to respect your study? If you feel you *can* go back to work there, your peace of mind will be restored to you. I am waiting for the recovery of mine and I know that I must help myself by clinging on to a certain faith of

mine which is often shaken, but of which I make a duty. Did the tulip-tree get frost-bitten this winter and are the peonies fine? I often make the journey in spirit and I see your garden and its surroundings. What a long time ago that seems; what a lot of things have happened since! Sometimes one wonders whether one is not a hundred years old!

Only my two little ones can keep a right notion of time in my head; they are growing well and they are so funny and sweet. It is only through them and through the two beings who gave them to me, that I feel myself still of this world; and through you, as well, dear friend, for I feel the vitality and goodness of your heart, which does not change. How I should like to see you. But now there are no means of getting about.

We embrace you and love you.

TO PRINCE JEROME

Nohant, 14th June, 1871.

My Friend,

I received your letter to Jules Favre safely. After the fearful consequences of the Empire, the war and the Commune which is holding together indissolubly, the event proves you to be right historically. The Republic was certainly quite as much at fault in not making peace soon enough, as it was in declaring war against the Prussians.

I think Jules Favre knows it quite well. His submission to the populace of Paris was an irreparable error, but it was inevitable at the moment and I do not think the Empire would have any right to reproach him with it, since it was the Empire which excited the belligerent spirit to a white heat, especially in Paris and without consulting the provinces, indeed without consulting France; for if they say that they were

authorised to declare war by the result of the plebiscite, they are lying to France and to themselves. That plebiscite was a dreadful trap, for the peasant who put his name to it thought he was signing for peace and security. It is not the moment to bring a case against the Republic if one happens to be called Bonaparte. The case is well made out with all your usual ability which no one has ever denied, and the accusations are well-founded, but you could not win the case in the face of general opinion for you reproach us with the follies that the Empire forced us into, and with the disasters into which it precipitated us.

I know all the wrongs and miseries committed by republicans better than you do. Although a republican by principle I did not scruple to give voice to them, day by day, during the siege and I am sure that a great many people accused me of plotting for you, who are not concerned in any plot. It is because you are acting in good faith and never consider yourself that I should have preferred you to keep silence for the moment.

Your reproaches to the republicans have also been uttered by the Commune, delivered from its own point of view. The Legitimists also reproach them, and all these reproaches for deeds already accomplished are leading us to the brink of extreme danger which France is not in a position to face any longer. It is very much to be feared that she will get so tired of the politics of all these creatures who desire to irritate her, agitate her and do her violence, that she may fall into a torpor in the course of which the first clever braggart who comes along will replace all parties by a mad dictatorship with anarchy unavoidable in the near future.

Alas ! is it not the moment to abandon all claimants to rulership and to unite around a wise Republic ? I know that you have nothing to do with any plot for Napoleon III or for his son, but the misfortune of

your position consists in your inability to utter a word publicly at present without being accused of either working for them or for yourself. If you alone could save us, I should beg you to act for yourself, but you could not do it, in spite of your first-rate intellect and generous heart. We are still suffering too bitterly from the malady brought to us by one who bears your name, and if you were to take one step now, civil war would open at your feet.

I say now, because I always believe that the time will come when you will be free to live as a citizen, perhaps as the first of good citizens, the most gifted, the most useful, the most devoted. But much water will have to pass under our bridges before that happens; at the moment the water is careering along as a torrent over our bridges; we must wait until the waters are calm and until our souls can recognise themselves again.

My children send you their devoted and affectionate homage, and I embrace you with all my heart.

G. Sand.

I sent on the defence and denial that you had sent to me, to various newspapers. I do not think they published it. It is cowardly; but possibly they never received it, the post has been in complete disorder as far as we are concerned. For the rest, be assured that not a creature believed a word of the particular calumny which tormented you. *It was too foolish.*

TO DUMAS FILS

Nohant, July, 1871.

My Dear Son,

After having kept me on tenterhooks for some time as you know the *Revue des Deux Mondes* has finally decided to send me a laconic statement with regard to the *Lettre de Junius*, to the effect that they are

returning my article as it *will be difficult to insert it*. No reason is alleged and no objection made either to my work or to that of Junius. It is left for us to guess that as these reasons could not be written, they are either injurious to us, or shameful to the *Revue*. It has made me furious, and I am severing my connection with the said *Revue* at any rate in the capacity of a member of the staff. My contract with it has expired and I am nearly even with it, in my accounts or at any rate perfectly well able to pay the difference. I have sent in for my account, and have let them know that I am resuming a position of absolute independence. If I have novels I want to sell them; I shall make my own conditions. I shall send them fewer stories and shall make them pay me more for them. It will all be for the good of my health.

But tell me why we should not produce a review of our own, you, I, About, Cherbuliez and a number of others who are equally discontented with the power that the *Revue* has arrogated to itself, of rejecting, altering or cutting this, that and the other, in fact assuming a right to pass all minds under the same flat-iron so that all relations with it have become intolerable to anyone with self-respect who holds his or her own convictions. During the last ten years I have been able to defend and preserve my own position up to a certain point. I only did business with Buloz who beneath his crabbed exterior has always a certain amount of artistic taste and respect for the individual. Now I suppose he is past steering his own ship, for he never answers the letters written to him in person and his name is never mentioned in the answers that one receives from his wife. She is an intelligent and good woman, but she evidently is not capable of managing the paper and does not try to, she only acts as an intermediary between me and the management, which is unknown to me in every way and I do not like dealings with the unknown. From the embarrassed

and vague manner in which she transmits the sayings of the oracle I perceived that a second-rate pedantry has obtained absolute power over the whole thing *and that no one is allowed to possess either sense or talent but the occult power and its friends.*

For some time now I have felt that I was a nuisance to the critics of the *Revue*. They did not want me to write my criticism from my point of view and perhaps they thought I was usurping their power by allowing myself an opinion of my own on you, on Hugo, and on anything which struck me and compelled me to deliver my opinion.

They left me to rule over the domain of romance, not without ill-tempered reluctance, which was perfectly obvious, but as they could not supply it themselves they had to leave it to someone else.

The position is no longer tenable for me and I wonder whether we could not produce a review, addressed to a younger and more vital circle of readers, more in harmony with what is going on than that antiquated *Revue des Deux Mondes*, which never extends its horizon, and draws in a fat living from its old public and the politics of 1835. It certainly is a solid concern and there will be no question of shaking its foundations. I am not applying to you in order to try and make war on it, but just in order to try and make an opening for a group of writers who have distinct value outside its sphere of influence. As to the possession of talent, grasp of a living and practical philosophy, the possibility of being the life and soul of the editorship, and the arbiter of ways and means, you could start a review single-handed which would have every chance of surviving, by dint of admitting diversity of aptitudes, originality of minds, and liberty for them to expand, in fact by admitting everything which the *Revue des Deux Mondes* contests, and will exclude altogether, if Buloz has retired from active partnership.

It seems to me that creative work of that sort is exactly what you need at the moment as it binds you to no one and assures you of a position of authority (in which you can act and defend yourself), which you have never had for your dealings with critics. You would have to find capital for an undertaking of this sort and you might buy up some review which has failed through want of an adequate circulation and practical knowledge of the business, although it had some literary value.

You are accused of wanting to be *either* a deputy or a director of a theatre, a ludicrous alternative at which you must have been one of the first to laugh heartily; but to be the Editor of a fine political and literary review is promotion for anyone and cannot fail to be a dignified and forceful position, because it is an independent position, because you can act instead of merely submitting. If I were young and had some knowledge of practical affairs I should not hesitate to go into it on my own account; but if you will be commanding officer I will follow you, as a good soldier should, and many others will rally to your standard and uphold you.

Weigh my idea carefully while the iron is hot. I think it is a favourable moment for the formation of a new critical journal, exactly the paper that you would know how to produce.

The spirit of France seems to be floating midway between the vile and the commonplace. The *Revue des Deux Mondes* was wrong not to publish the *Lettres de Junius in extenso* immediately. They might have lost a few German subscribers (no doubt that was where the shoe pinched) but would have gained more in France. The *Revue* is going to take up the position of a laboratory for diplomacy apparently! Then you must found a review for France, and be the true expression, the living renewal of French preponderance in all domains of the mind which belong

primarily to her, as *Junius* has stated, demonstrated and proved.

And what are we going to do with my article for the moment? I do not know. I am not in touch with the other papers. Would you advise me to try the *Temps* which is the safest and most respectable organ we have? but they could not give me so much space as a review. Are there any other reviews? Does the old *Revue Britannique* still appear? I should be welcomed cordially there, and I do not care if they have only a small circle. There would certainly be readers for that number. So tell me what you advise. I will have the article sent back to me and will send it where ever you advise.

We are all well and embrace you.

G. Sand.

TO FLAUBERT

Nohant, 23 July, 1871.

No, I am not ill my dear old troubadour in spite of the sorrow which is France's daily bread; I have iron health and am experiencing an exceptional old age, really extraordinary as my strength is increasing at an age when it should be diminishing. The day on which I resolved to bury my youth I became rejuvenated by twenty years. You may tell me that the bark does not suffer the less from the outrage of Time. That matters nothing to me for the core of the tree is sound and the sap is still functioning just as it is in the old apple-trees in my garden which bear all the more fruit the more ancient and gnarled they become. I thank you for having been concerned about the illness with which the newspapers kindly credited me. Maurice sends his thanks and greetings too. He continues to have interludes of marionette performances in the course of his agricultural, scientific

and literary work. He thinks of you at every performance and wishes he could have you there to confirm the fact of his progress, for he improves them every time.

And how do we stand now according to your opinion?

You have no more Prussian domination at Rouen and that is something. One hears that the *bourgeoise* Republic wants to have its turn. As you predict, they will be stupid; I do not doubt it; but after a certain inevitable period with the *épiciers* in power, life will certainly have to branch out in every direction. The filth of the Commune has given us an example of dangers which were not sufficiently foreseen beforehand, and necessitate a new political life for all; and that will take the form of minding one's own business and forcing the charming proletariat created by the Empire to know what is possible and what is not. Education cannot teach honour and disinterestedness in a single day.

Are you working? Is *Saint-Antoine* going on well? Tell me what you are doing in Paris, what you are seeing and what you are thinking. I have not the courage to go there. So do come and see me before going back to Croisset. I am so weary of not seeing you; it is like a sort of death.

TO FLAUBERT

Nohant, August, 1871.

You need and desire to see me and yet you do not come, that is not right, for I am sighing for you and so is everyone here. We parted so cheerfully eighteen months ago and now so many terrible things stand between us. To see each other would be the consolation which is our *due*. I cannot move, because I have not a farthing and must work like a nigger.

And then I have never seen a single Prussian throughout the war and I want to keep my eyes pure from that defilement. Oh! my friend what years we went through over that business! One simply must not look back because then hope goes with all the rest!

What will be the counter-stroke of this infamous Commune? Napoleon or Henry V or the reign of incendiaries brought back in the service of anarchy? For some time now I have only been able to take a black view of my species, though I have had so much patience with them and have looked at them with the most favourable eye. I had conquered so much in my own character; I had extinguished all useless and dangerous ebullitions; I had sown grass and flowers upon my volcano and they were coming up well, and I had been imagining that everybody could become enlightened and learn to correct and control himself, that the years which had passed over the heads of myself and my fellows, could not have been wasted for one's reason or one's experience; and now behold, I must wake up from my dream to find a generation in being, which is divided between cretinism and *delirium tremens*. Anything is possible in these days!

At the same time it is wrong to despair. I shall in time make a great effort and perhaps may recover my patience and my steady poise, but to-day I can do nothing towards it. I am as much agitated as you are and I dare neither speak, nor think, nor write, so much do I fear to re-open the gaping wounds which the souls of all of us have suffered. I received your letter safely and I have been waiting for courage to answer it; I only want to be of use to those I love, especially to anyone as sensitive as you, and I am good for nothing at this moment.

I am devoured by indignation and almost slain by the raging disgust I feel.

All I know is that I love you and my children say the same. Kiss your dear little mother for me.

TO CHARLES-EDMOND

Nohant, 3rd November, 1871.

DEAR FRIEND,

The novel will simply be called *Nanon*. I have read it (at least as much of it as is written, two-thirds), to Maurice. He says that it *paints the story very well* and as he is always difficult to please where I am concerned I have hopes of finishing the novel without being too much disgusted with myself.

I have the misfortune to feel discontented with almost everything I have written, for I never find that the execution does justice to the conception. Indeed my whole desire is set on really giving you your money's worth. How I pity you for being in the thick of rehearsals! I know that torment and I also know the person who is exasperating you; she is a spoilt child who cannot reconcile herself to the fact that she is getting older and tries to punish all the world for the fact, being particularly vindictive to her parts.

I have vowed that I personally will never give her another part, not that she did not sustain the one I did give her very well, but she dropped it very soon, and the trouble she gave me at rehearsals was not worth the service that she gave me.

Sarah[1] is not much more dependable, unless she has changed a great deal. She is an excellent girl in her way, but she will not work and only thinks of amusing herself; when she comes to play her part she improvises it; of course she often gets an effect that way, but it is not always what it ought to be. You will have to console yourself with Pierre Berton who is so faithful and accurate and conscientious and reliable.

No, I am not thinking of producing a play. I have two or three but nothing suitable to the times. It

[1] Sarah Bernhardt.

seems to me that the public is in a dazed muddle-headed condition. I would really rather have my plays performed in the provinces.

Dinners at Magny's have begun again have they? Who goes there now? Has poor Edmond de Goncourt ever re-appeared? I have not heard a word of him since the death of his brother. Saint-Victor has written a fine book. Has Flaubert ever joined you at Magny's? I do not know whether he is still in Paris.

I count on your keeping me informed as to your adventures. The theatre is always amusing, once one has resigned oneself to the result whatever it may be. It is always a gamble. Good courage to you and good luck. You know how much I desire it.

Yours from my heart,

G. SAND.

TO FLAUBERT

Nohant, 17 *January*, 1872.

My troubadour, I have not forgotten what you asked of me and I shall do it, but this week I really must rest. I have been far too gay at the carnival with my grand-daughters and great-nephews.

Kisses from myself and all my brood.

TO FLAUBERT

Nohant, 28 *January*, 1872.

Your preface is splendid, the book is divine.[1] There! I have written a line of verse unawares. God forgive me for it! Yes, you are right. His was not a gift of the second order, and one's place in the

[1] *Dernièrs Chansons*, by Louis Bouilhot, to which Flaubert had written a preface.

intellectual orders does not decree itself, especially in this age when the work of critics is entirely destructive and constructs nothing.

You have put your whole heart into this simple and tactful story of his life. I can understand now why he died so young; he died of living too much in spirit. I beg of you not to sink too deeply into literature and erudition. Travel, shake yourself up, have mistresses, or other women if you feel like it, and during those phases take a complete rest from your work, for you really must not burn the candle at both ends. What one really ought to do, is to keep changing the end that one burns.

In my old age even, I keep plunging into torrents of idleness; the silliest and most infantile amusements are enough for me, and I am all the more lucid after my lapses into such imbecilities.

Bouilhot's premature death is a great loss to art. In ten years' time there will not be a poet left. Your preface is fine, it is really beautiful. There are pages of it which are models of prose, and it is quite true that the *bourgeois* could read them without seeing anything remarkable about them.

Ah! if one had not a little sanctuary, a little inner pagoda to take refuge in, where without a word to anybody one enters into dreaming contemplation of the true and the beautiful, one would be obliged to say: Cui bono?

TO FLAUBERT

9th April, 1872.

My thoughts are with you all day and all night, every moment, my poor dear friend. I am thinking of the heartrending events around you, and I wish I could be with you. The vexation of being pinned to this place makes me feel worse. I should be so glad

of a line from you to tell me that you have found the courage that you must find. The end of that dear and blameless existence has been long and painful, for she fell into depressions from the first day of her infirmities and you have never been able to distract or console her. And now alas! that cruel unrelaxing preoccupation of yours is ended as everything ends in this world with heart-break after struggle. What a bitter conquest of peace, and you will miss your perpetual anxiety, I know. I know the kind of consternation which follows a struggle against death. And after all is said and done my dear child, I can do no more for you, than open a mother's heart to you, which cannot replace hers, but which suffers very keenly with yours in every one of your sorrows.

TO FLAUBERT

Nohant, 3rd July, 1872.

I want to write to you to-day. *Sixty-eight years old;* perfect health in spite of the whooping-cough which has only let me sleep at nights since I have resumed the habit of plunging every day into a little raging torrent, as cold as ice. It boils over rocks, flowers and tall grasses in delicious shade. It is an ideal bathing-pool.

We have had some terrible storms; a thunder-bolt fell in our garden and our stream, the *Indore*, has become a Pyrrenean torrent and it is not unpleasant I can tell you. What a splendid summer! The hay is seven feet high and the blades of corn are bunches of grain. The peasants think they are too full but I let them talk, it is so beautiful. I walk down to the river and jump into the icy water in a tremendous sweat. My doctor thinks that quite mad, but I let him talk too; I am recovering while his other patients

take care of themselves in vain, and die. I partake of the nature of the grass of the fields: water and sunshine are all I need.

So you are on the way to the Pyrrenees. Ah! how I envy you! I love them so much. I have made the maddest expeditions amongst them; but I do not know Luchon. Is it beautiful too? You must not go there without going to see the circus at Gavarnie and the road which leads to it. And what about Cauterets and the Lake of Gaube? And the road to Saint-Sauveur? Mon Dieu! how happy you are to be able to travel, to see mountains, and flowers and precipices! And does it really bore you? Do you even remember that there are such things as editors, directors of theatres, readers and the public, when you are exploring in the country? I forget it all, just as I do when Pauline Viardot sings.

The other day we discovered a desert, three miles from us, an absolute desert with woods rising out of a vast stretch of country where there was not a cottage to be seen, not a human being, not a sheep nor a hen, nothing but flowers, butterflies and birds throughout a whole day's walk. But where will my letter find you. I shall wait to send it to you until you have given me an address.

TO BERTON PÈRE

Cabourg, 5th August, 1872.

We are at Cabourg-les-Bains (Calvados) at the *Grand Hotel de la Plage*. In spite of the continual storm and rain we are all quite well. My grand-daughters are not coughing any longer, nor am I. We have drenched our respective whooping-coughs in the sea, in spite of heavy surfs and my sixty-eight years are none the worse for it. I am with my charming

daughter-in-law, the two little things, and our good friend Planchut. We are expecting my son and my great-nephews. I am enjoying my *farniente* at the sea with absolute delight. We shall stay on here for ten or twelve days, and we shall make the journey home through Brittany very probably, following the coast as much as possible in order to fill the tired lungs of our little ones with salt air.

This is our bulletin of news, my dear friend, since you wanted to know what was happening to us. I only received your letter yesterday, Maurice sent it to me from Nohant where we shall all be gathered once more in the month of September, and we shall expect you there. I am almost feeling my way to write this letter, as there is no lamp, and I cannot see properly by candle-light.

Tell Fechter that his memory is absolutely at fault. I could not have shewn my displeasure with him at rehearsals of *Claudie* because I was not present. It was Bocage who produced the piece. I never set eyes on Fechter until the seventh performance of *Claudie* which was the only one I attended. I was astonished and delighted with him. At the end I went to his box and greeted him, though I may not have put into words all that I ought to have expressed. I was far too pleased and excited and then I am always shy about tackling new people. If anyone told him that I did not admire him without reserve in his part, which he played exquisitely, that some one must have supposed me to be idiotic. There is the *exact truth*.

As for you, my young friend, I must always be grateful for your kind and faithful affection. I feel I deserve it as my love for you is deep and maternal. Although I shall soon be a septuagenarian I do not wish to leave the career in which one risks appearing in one's dotage if one carries it on too long, before seeing you reconquer the place that is due to you. You have still twenty years of youth before you in

which to have high successes and to serve the Muses. I wish I could give you a second success like that of your part in *Villemer*. Shall we have good luck again? One never knows. Let us do our utmost to bring it about. We will discuss your part at Nohant and perhaps you can throw light into the depths of a character that I am attempting to recreate on a new basis. Moreali is no longer the personage of the novel. He is not a priest. He never really has been. I mean that he still has the spirit of a priest but he has fallen passionately in love with Mademoiselle La Quintinie, who is in love with another man.

Good-night, my boy. I embrace you.

TO BERTON PÈRE

Nohant, 6th October, 1872.

My Dear Boy,

I do not know if you have read your part of Moreali. Do not be in a hurry to learn it. I am in the act of modifying it considerably. In my first version, which was read to Chilly, Moreali was really pure; he had fallen in love but was not aware of it and only discovered after a time when he had lost hope of making a conversion. That idea was for me the whole man and the whole play. Chilly and Duquesnel burst out into loud objections, saying that a character like that would only be a weight on the play; that it made him an intolerable and odious character and that he must declare his love from the very outset. What I ought to have said would have been: "*Then there shall not be any play at all!*" But I am not good at self-defence and I gave in. And then afterwards they came round to see that the first version was the right one. I have come back to it with great satisfaction and I think you will be pleased too, because the

character has become the person I always meant him to be.

You do not give me any news of yourself. I hope that you are better. Write to me. I send a kiss.

GEORGE SAND.

I am making haste to re-write your part almost completely, and I shall send the alteration of the first act to Charles-Edmond to-day. I had been asked to make the prayer with which your part opens longer and more explicit, but it came to me in the night that I ought not to. The young lover is on the stage and listens to the prayer. I must make it short and indefinite; a prayer said kneeling would be wearisome. It would be better for you to pass across like a mysterious apparition. But when you come back at the end of the first act, you shall have a longer speech and will be able to make yourself known to the public and appreciated.

TO CHARLES-EDMOND

Nohant, 14 *October*, 1873.

MY DEAR GOOD FRIEND,

I am much afflicted by what has happened to Berton but not altogether surprised. A letter from him written in London which I received at Cabourg was a token of some kind of dementia that we attributed to a moment of intoxication and it made us all laugh, but the complete disorder of his ideas in subsequent letters alarmed me on his account, and I knew there was going to be an explosion. It is no use thinking any more about giving him the part of Moreali.

Let us only deplore once again the folly of these poor artists who want to bring stage emotions and the excited condition of pathological cases into real life. As one should always look for the good side of things

let us console ourselves with the thought that if this explosion had taken place when the play was once launched it would have killed it, and it is not killed because it has not yet begun to live. As for the efforts of this poor madman to make it a failure in advance, they can do no possible harm. There will be plenty of other people who from clerical motives will declare that it is a complete failure. That will be said and will be printed. The play will have to defend itself and if the enemy carries the day our defeat will not be without honour. Therefore let us strive to make the play a good one. Everything depends on that.

Let us examine this Berton incident to the bottom. It leaves me quite calm so far as I am concerned. I am only unhappy about the unfortunate man himself for I have been a real friend to him in spite of all his follies. I fear a sad end for him and I have done all that is humanly possible to spare him it.

If we cannot use him there is no one but Lafontaine. Lafontaine would play some portions of the rôle better than Berton, but the whole would perhaps be a less distinguished performance. So we ought to consider it well before making any overtures to him. It is a long time since I have seen him act, so I want you and Duquesnel to thresh the matter out without me.

If we cannot get either Berton or Lafontaine as there are no other actors of the type available we shall have to postpone the production. It will not be the fault of anyone of us. The mother's part is also a difficult one to place, and I do not know if you have anyone in your mind for it. In a word the piece is a ticklish one to perform, and if Duquesnel cannot produce it, let him be quite sure that I should not be so foolish as to bear him a grudge for it.

I read the play to my children last night. Maurice who never liked the theme of it and only listened

unwillingly was strongly held by it. Réné who is prudence and calm personified, also feared he would dislike the subject. However, he was held by the last acts and he said that I am right to have gone into battle, and that if I fall it will be with glory. To sum up, they made various observations which I approved of.

My alterations will be made in two or three days from now and meantime will you or Duquesnel take steps to replace Berton and if you find my presence necessary in order to come to a decision, I will start at once.

Thank you! Thank you! Thank you! You are the best and most devoted of friends. You have put your whole strength into serving my cause and I feel remorseful for being so supine myself but I should not be, if there were anything to menace you.

Tender messages from Nohant. Lolo is true to you. Planchut has at last succeeded in killing a turkey tied by the legs which was awaiting the cook's knife in the yard. As for the subscriptions for the Alsatians, give what you think suitable on my behalf please. I will owe it you.

TO JULIETTE ADAM

Nohant, 16 *Oct.*, 1872.

We are all well at Nohant, my Juliette. Maurice has just gone away again on an entomological excursion into the forest of Orleans after having explored la Sologne a few days ago. He is pretty well and is as ever the life and soul of the house.

I think I wrote to you that we had been to the sea for July and August and the children left their whooping-cough behind there. I brought mine back but I have got used to it and it does not disturb me in the

least. During the whole of September we must have had fifteen or twenty guests here, with dancing, marionettes and above all music. Ah! what music! Pauline Viardot and her two daughters! The bliss of heavenly beauty which you say was yours in Venice, was ours at Nohant then. Tourgénieff came too, and our friend General Ferri; I will not mention the others whom you do not know. And all the time I had a heavy piece of work to finish. Now I am preparing to go and spend a few days in Paris, and am going back there for a longer stay when I may perhaps have the joy of finding you there.

Planchut came back here when Madame Viardot came. He is waiting for me, to go back to his niche in the Boulevard des Italians. He goes out after game, that is to say his dog goes out and he follows in a nonchalant manner. We always tease him about it and he returns our chaff, laughing as stridently as a hunchback, like the great simpleton he is.

Lolo is learning to read all over again. She pretended that she had forgotten it all during the holidays, but as I was not cross and pretended to believe her, she soon got tired of it and began to read very well. She is superbly well and always good. Titite is also picking up strength so fast that you can see her progress. That is our whole life. It presents no radical changes and we always love each other and get on with each other. May God give you the same happiness, my child. May your son-in-law be for you what Lina is to me and you will then have your full reward for your devotion to your charming Alice. I send kisses to both and to you and Adam. Give my greetings to all in dear Bruyère. My nestful here send you a thousand tender messages.

G. Sand.

I will read your *Journal du Siege* in volume form. I cannot read it as a serial. You will send it to me?

TO FLAUBERT

Nohant, 22 *November*, 1872.

I do not think I shall be going up to Paris before February. My play is put off owing to the difficulty of finding an interpreter for the principal part. I am glad, for to leave Nohant and all my occupations and beautiful walks here would not suit me at all; what a kind warm autumn for old people it has been! At a distance of two hours' walk from here we have absolutely deserted woods, where even one day after rain, the soil is as dry as a room, and where there are still flowers for me and insects for Maurice. The little girls rush about there like rabbits among bracken which is taller than they are. My God! How good life can be when everything that one loves is instinct with vitality. You are the only *black speck* in the life of my heart, because you are sad and will no longer face the sunlight. As for the people I care nothing for, I care nothing for the malice or folly that they may direct against me, or bring down upon their own heads. They pass like a shower of rain.

Eternal verity is simply the feeling for beauty in a good heart. You have both and so you have no right to be unhappy. Perhaps your life has really needed the feminine influence and presence that you have defied! I know that the feminine is good for nothing but perhaps we must be a little unhappy to be happy.

I have been unhappy myself. I know all, all about it, but then I am so good at forgetting. Anyway, sad or cheerful, I love you and I expect you here whenever you can come, although you never propose to come and see us and that you refuse eagerly if the opportunity does arise. Yet we love you here. We are not literary enough for you I admit, but we love you and love fills up life you know.

Is *Saint Antoine* finished as you are beginning to talk of a work of immense scope? Or is it *Saint*

Antoine which is to spread its wings across the entire universe? It could, of course, as the subject is a huge one. I embrace you my old troubadour; I still call you that though you are determined to turn yourself into an old Benedictine. Needless to say I remain a troubadour.

I send you two novels for your collection of my works, but you are not obliged to read them at the moment if you are plunged into grave matters.

TO FLAUBERT

Nohant, 8th December, 1872.

Well, if you are living on an ideal plane, if you have the book of the future germinating in your brain, if you are accomplishing a task of confidence and conviction, let there be no more anger or sadness; let us be logical.

I have arrived at a philosophical condition of very satisfying serenity, and I did not exaggerate in the least when I told you, that all the miseries that could be piled upon me and all the indifference which could be displayed towards me, cannot really touch me any more, and not only do not prevent me from being happy outside literature, but do not prevent me either from doing my literary work with pleasure, nor from working with joy.

So you were pleased with my two novels? That is sufficient reward. I think they are all right, and the silence which has invaded my life[1] (it must be admitted that I sought it) is filled with the sound of a kind voice which speaks and suffices me for everything. My ambition never did leap as high as yours. You want to write for all time; while I believe that in fifty years' time I shall be absolutely forgotten and perhaps cruelly misunderstood. That is the law of

[1] This evidently means that George Sand's novels had ceased to attract attention in the literary world.

things which do not belong to the first order, and I have never believed that I belong to the first order. My ideal has been rather to influence my contemporaries, were it only a few of them, and to make them understand my ideal of gentleness and poetry. I have attained that end, up to a certain point; at any rate I have done my best and am still doing my best and my reward is that I do get nearer my aim.

So much for me. But your aim is so much vaster, and your success so much more distant, I can see that, of course! Then what you must do is to live more at peace with yourself than I am. Your short-lived rages are *good*. They result from a generous temperament and as they are neither spiteful nor malicious I approve of them. But I cannot understand your sadness, your weeks on end of melancholy, and I do reproach you for them. I have thought and I still think that the reason for them is to be found in the isolation of your mode of living, which detaches you from all the vital bonds of life. Of course you have powerful reasons for retort, so powerful that they will no doubt give you the victory.

Examine yourself and answer me were it only to dissipate the fears that I often have on your account. I do not wish you to consume yourself. Like my son, you are about fifty years old. He is in the prime of life, at the height of his development, and you the same, if you do not burn yourself up in the furnace of ideas. Why do you often say that you wish you were dead? Do you, then, not believe in your work? Do you allow yourself to be influenced by this, that or the other in the present? It is possible, for we are not Gods, and some tinge of feebleness and inconsequence does trouble our Olympian calm at times. But when one is certain of being the true lover of logic and truth, the victory becomes easier every day. We arrive at the power of foreseeing and conquering beforehand the causes of ill-temper,

anger or discouragement. All this seems quite easy to me when it is a question of conquering oneself: the causes of great sorrow are to be found elsewhere, in the pageant of history which unrolls itself before our eyes; the eternal struggle between civilisation and barbarism is a great cause of bitterness to those who have shed the skin of the barbarian and are in advance of their age. But this great pain, this secret anger is a great stimulant which uplifts us and inspires us to act. Without it I confess that for my part I should give up the struggle altogether.

I have had quite a lot of compliments in the course of my life since I took to literature. I have always mistrusted them for they made me mistrust myself. I have earned enough money to make me rich and if I am not rich it is because I did not care enough about it: I get enough to live on out of Lévy.[1] What I should really like, would be to give myself up entirely to botany. That would be Paradise on earth for me. But I must not do it because it would serve no one but myself, and if sorrow has any good in it at all it is because it teaches us not to be selfish. Thus you see that one must not curse or despise life. One must not make use of it in a headstrong way. You are in love with *justice* so begin by being just to yourself. You ought to preserve your powers and develop them.

Listen to me. I love you tenderly, I think of you every day and on every possible occasion: when working I think of you. I have won certain intellectual boons which you deserve more than I do, and which you would be able to use for a far longer period.

Remember always that my spirit is often near to yours and that it desires for you a long life and fruitful inspirations from real joys.

You promise to come. That means rejoicing for my heart and in my family.

[1] Michel Lévy was her publisher during the later years of her life.

TO AURORE SAND

Paris, 27 *April*, 1873.

My Darling Lolo,

I shall send off a box to you to-morrow. You will find in it:

A little garden wheel-barrow for you or Titite, if hers is broken, and if she does not think this too big. You will tell me and I will bring a second one according as you may decide.

Two dolls which can be painted: the little one dressed, for Titite, the bigger one is for you.

Two pink parasols, one for each of you.

An umbrella for you.

A little toy serpent for Titite.

Two indiarubber babies, the largest for you.

The clowns at my toy-shop are ugly and not very nice. I shall try to find some elsewhere, and I will bring whatever I can find.

I hug you to death; I miss you and am very dull without you, but I shall not stay long.

Always love your *bonne mie* who cherishes you.

TO PRINCE JEROME

Nohant, 30*th December*, 1873.

Dear Great Friend,

I want to be one of the first to wish you the classic happy new year from a heart which is classic too in the fidelity of its affection. I do not know where you are at the moment. When one settles down for eternity in the country as we have, one writes less and less, and one hardly receives any letters.

The newspapers never have a word of truth in them now, but I did hear through friends that you were in Paris recently. Shall you spend the winter

there? Shall I have the good luck to find you there when I am able to go up, that is to say when the bad frosts are over. I am no longer able to bear them outside my own nest for my seventieth *spring* is just approaching. I have only one thing to rejoice me in this foolish and villainous state of politics and that is that you have been left in liberty to live where you like. So we shall not have to wait centuries to see you again in Paris or at Nohant, which is always full of the memory of you and where you have a big god-daughter of eight years old, good, charming and very intelligent, who has not forgotten the slightest thing about you.

Maurice and my daughter-in-law ask to be remembered to you and to join their good wishes with mine.

Yours always, my dear friend,

G. Sand.

TO PRINCE JEROME

Nohant, 28 *December*, 1874.

My Dear Good Friend,

Please accept tender greetings and my best wishes for the end of this year. Your god-daughter Aurore who continues to be very beautiful, good and intelligent asks me to send you a kiss from her. We are anxiously expecting the photograph and she will send you a portrait of herself. I am not feeling very well, but I am learning to be patient and am always very happy in this quiet corner with my dear family, who are all happy too. All goes well at home for those who do their best but we cannot regard public life without sorrow and fear.

If a wise republic is not possible where will the tide of affairs carry us? The family of claimants to which you belong, repel you, for you are too advanced

for them. From whatever quarter the wind blows it is full of threats and hatred.

Are you able to cling on to hope and courage all the same? Give us some of it and tell us that you are well and that you still love your faithful old friends at Nohant who think constantly of you and always cherish you.

GEORGE SAND.

TO FLAUBERT

Nohant, 16 *January*, 1875.

I, too, my dear friend, embrace and greet you at the opening of the new year hoping that it will be tolerable for you, since you will no longer listen to the myth of happiness. You admire my serenity: it does not come from the depths of me, it comes from the necessity that has come to me of thinking only of others. It is time, for old age stalks on and death has me by the shoulders. I am still, if not necessary, at least extremely useful to my family and as long as I can draw breath I shall go on thinking, talking and working for them.

Duty is the Master of masters. It is the Zeus of our times, the son of Time and becomes its master. It lives and acts outside all the agitations of this world. It does not reason or argue. It examines without dread: it marches on without looking behind. Stupid Cronos swallowed stones, but Zeus shatters them with his lightnings and his lightning is the human will. I am not a philosopher, but the servant of Zeus, *who robs slaves of half their souls, but the souls of the brave he leaves intact.*

I have no more leisure to think of myself, to moon over discouragement, or to despair of the human species, to look back on my past joys and pains or to

call upon death. Parbleu! If one were selfish, one would welcome death, it would be so convenient to be able to sleep dreamlessly for ever, or to awake to a better life, for death offers those two hypotheses or to put it better this antithesis. But for anyone who has work left in him or in her, death must not be entreated before the hour strikes when exhaustion opens the doors of liberty. You have missed the experience of having children. It is the punishment of those who want to be too independent, but that form of suffering is glory in those who vow themselves to Apollo. Do not complain to us of being obliged to dig, and depict it as a martyrdom; there is a fine book to be made out of the subject.

Renan is in despair you say. I do not believe that, I know he suffers of course like all who *must* go far and high, but he must have personal force in proportion to his mental outlook. Napoleon (Jerome) shares his views, it would be better if he would adopt them all. He has just written me a very sage letter. He now sees possible salvation in a wise Republic, and I still consider it a possibility. It would be a very bourgeois affair with little of the ideal about it, but one must begin at the beginning. We artists do not know what patience is. We want our Abbey of Theleme straight away but in life one always has to say "Do what you can," before "Do what you wish."

I love and embrace you with all my heart and my children, big and little, join with me. No weakness! Come! We all owe an example to our friends, our neighbours and our fellow-citizens. And do you not think that I need help and support in my long task which is not finished yet? Do you no longer love anyone, not even your old troubadour, who *will* go on singing, though she must often weep, but means to go and hide, as cats do, when she comes to die?

TO PLANCHUT

Nohant, 6th May, 1875.

This catastrophe[1] has been a great sorrow to me and has absolutely upset me. I had come to feel a warm friendship for him and entire confidence in him. I can foresee many inconveniences in being unable to lean on that strong devoted arm any longer.

Oh, how sad life is! Life in which one is continually doomed to see everything crumble around one, life in which one is never sure of seeing the friend of the morning alive in the evening.

You must have been troubled and grieved too. If you were here I should not be so sad, but we must accustom ourselves to it. However courageous one may be, sombre destiny defeats our will and the brave are struck down with the feeble.

We all embrace you. Write to us.

G. SAND.

TO DOCTOR HENRI FAVRE

Nohant, 16 *June*, 1875.

DEAR FRIEND,

We arrived in harbour; the child is not tired.[2] We are beginning the treatment. There is nothing interesting to report on her yet. This present letter is to let you know that at the request of my publishers who are planning to bring out a fine edition of my works, complete this time, I have decided to dedicate all the books which are not already provided with dedications, to friends of my choice. To-day I have dedicated Léone Léoni to you, but of course I must

[1] The death of her publisher, Michel Lévy.

[2] George Sand had taken Aurore to Paris to be examined by Doctor Favre as she suffered from headaches.

know that you agree; in a word, if that work does not suit you, let me offer you another.

Yours from my heart, in great haste because of post-time.

Tender greetings and thanks from us all.

G. Sand.

TO FLAUBERT

Nohant, 15 *Dec.*, 1875.

So you are in Paris and you have left the lodgings in rue Murillo. Are you working? Good hope and good courage to you! Poor fellow, you are recovering then! I know that they are rehearsing *Victorine* at the Français but I do not know whether I shall go to see the revival. I have been so ill all the summer, and I so often have intestinal trouble now that I do not know whether I shall find the strength to move anywhere in winter-time. We shall see. The hope of getting to Paris does give me courage, it is not courage that I lack, but since attaining my seventieth year my health has deteriorated considerably and I do not know whether it is possible to get the better of it. I can no longer take a step without the risk of atrocious pains, think of it! I who am so fond of using my legs. I am patient over these troubles and I work all the harder for them, and have taken to water-colour painting in my hours of leisure.

Aurore is my consolation and absolutely charms me. I should have liked to have lived long enough to see her married but God disposes of us and we must accept death and life according to His will. Well, this is just to tell you that I shall come to see you, if I find it is not quite impossible. You will go on reading what you began on the last occasion. In the meanwhile do let me have some news of you, for I

shall not make any move until the last rehearsals come on. I know the caste, I know they will all do their best, according to the means at their disposal, and moreover I know that Perrin will superintend them. We all hug you tenderly and we love you.

TO FLAUBERT

Nohant, 12 *January*, 1876.

I have been meaning to write to you every day, but I have never had time. Now at last I have a clear interval. We are simply buried in snow; it is the weather I adore: this whiteness is like a general purification and indoor amusements are quieter and more intimate. Can one dislike the country in winter? The snow is one of the most magnificent spectacles of the year.

It seems that I do not make myself clear in my sermons; I have that in common with the orthodox, but I am not of their persuasion, neither have I any fixed ideas in the theories of equality or authority. You seem to believe that I want to convert you to some doctrine. But no! I am not thinking of such a thing. I respect everyone's right to a personal point of view. I can give you the substance of mine in very few words: it is simply not to stick myself behind a plate of opaque glass which gives no view but a faint reflection of one's own nose. Then I try to see as far as possible, to take in all good and evil, near and around, below and everywhere, to perceive the incessant gravitation of all tangible and intangible things towards the necessity of goodness, truth and beauty.

I do not say that humanity is on the path to the summits. I believe it in spite of everything. But I will not argue the matter, for it is quite useless,

because everyone judges according to their own personal vision, and the general aspect becomes momentarily poor and ugly. Besides I have no need to be certain of the salvation of this planet and its inhabitants to believe in the necessity of the good and the beautiful. If the planet broke away from that law it would perish: if its inhabitants refused to obey the law, destruction would come upon them. Other stars and other souls would crash across them. As for myself, I want to climb onwards, until I draw my last breath, not exacting, not feeling certain of a *good place* elsewhere, but because my only joy is to keep myself and my children on the upward path.

In other words I flee from the sewers and I seek cleanliness, certain that it is the law of my existence. After all man is nothing very grand; he is terribly close to the ape from which we are said to be descended So be it. All the more reason for doing our best to get away from him, and to reach the very highest that our race is capable of which is only a very humble level to attain. Well, let us attain it, if possible and not allow anything to debase us.

I think you and I agree there; but I practice my simple faith and you do not, since you allow yourself to be cast down; your heart has not been penetrated by it since you curse life and implore death like a Catholic who hopes for compensation, be it only eternal rest. You are no more secure than anyone else of that compensation. Eternal life may mean eternal work. If it should be so, let us go bravely through this stage. If it is otherwise and the personal spark perishes, let us at least earn the credit of having got through our task—and that is, having done our duty as we have no evident duties except those to ourselves and our fellows. Anything we destroy in ourselves we destroy in others. Our falls lower others and throw them down; we owe it to our

fellows to keep upright, in order that they too may keep their feet. To desire immediate death is as much a weakness as to hope for a long life and I will not allow you to go on thinking that you have the right to do it. I once thought so too; yet I had the same beliefs that I hold to-day, but I lacked force, and like you I said "I can do nothing". But I was lying to myself. One can do anything. One has strength that one never thought one had, when one is dominated by the desire to rise, to mount one step of the ladder every day. You ought to say: "Flaubert of tomorrow must be better than Flaubert of yesterday, and the day after he must be better and stronger still".[1] Once your foot is on the ladder, you will mount rapidly. Little by little you will enter the most favourable stage of life: old age. It is then that art will reveal itself in gentle guise, when one is younger it brings much anguish into life. You prefer a polished phrase to the whole of metaphysics. I too appreciate a phrase which sums up the contents of several volumes, but one must have complete understanding of these volumes in order to be able to hit on the sublime formula which crystallises their meaning, and becomes in consequence the highest expression of literary art; that is why we must never despise the smallest effort of the human brain to arrive at truth.

I say that because you have an excessive belief in *words*. You read and search and work much harder than I, or many others, do. You have acquired learning at which I shall never arrive. You are thus a hundred times richer than all of us, you are rich, and you whimper as if you were a beggar. Do be charitable to that beggar who has a mattress full of gold but wants to live on words and well-turned phrases. Foolish fellow! Stuff your hand into the mattress and use your gold. Nourish yourself on

[1] We here see that George Sand was the forerunner of M. Coué.

the feelings and ideas amassed in your head and your heart, then the words and phrases, the *form* that you make so much of, will come out without any trouble. You treat form as an end, it is only a means. Happy manifestations of form are only to be drawn from an emotion, and an emotion only comes from a conviction. One is not moved by anything that one does not believe in ardently.

I do not say that you have no belief; on the contrary your whole life of affection, protection and charming simple kindness prove that you are the most convinced individualist who ever existed. But no sooner do you touch literature than you become, I do not know why, a totally different man; a man who wants to hide himself, annihilate himself, have no existence. What an extraordinary mania! What a falsification of good taste! *Our work has always the same worth as ourselves.*

Who talks of your taking the stage and posing in publicity? That is nonsense if you like, unless it is done frankly as a performance. But what sick fancy is this attempt to withdraw your soul from what you are doing? To hide one's own opinion on the personages one creates and in consequence leave the reader doubtful as to what opinion he ought to have of them, is to wish that one should not be understood, and henceforward the reader will desert you; for if he wants to listen to the story you are telling him, it is on condition that you will tell him plainly who is strong and who a weak character.

Education Sentimentale was a totally misunderstood book and I told you so with an insistance that you would not listen to. It either needed a short preface or some happily turned expression to shew that you condemned evil, portrayed weakness and acclaimed effort. All the characters of the book are feeble and miscarry, except those who have bad instincts and ruin noble efforts. When we are not understood it is

always our own fault. The reader's first aim is to penetrate our thought and that is what you haughtily refuse him. He thinks that you despise him and are making fun of him. I understood you because I know you well. If your book had been brought to me without a signature I should have thought it fine, but strange, and I should have wondered whether you were an immoral being, a sceptic, an indifferent or heart-broken. You say that it ought to be so and that M. Flaubert would be lacking in manners if he were to allow his thought and his literary aim to be evident. That is false, false as hell!

From the moment that M. Flaubert begins to write well and seriously one becomes attached to his personality and desires to be lost or saved with him. If he leaves one in doubt one can no longer take any interest in his work, one misunderstands and throws him aside.

I have already combatted your favourite heresy, that of writing for a score of superior persons and snapping one's fingers at the rest. It is not a true one since the absence of all success irritates and afflicts. Besides there were not twenty favourable critics to this remarkable and excellently written book. This means that one should no more write for twenty people than for three, or for a hundred thousand.

One ought to write for everyone who has any desire to read and can take advantage of good books. Thus you must make straight for morality, the highest that one can find within and not make a mystery of the moral sense of one's volume which might profit something to someone.

Madame Bovary was considered immoral. But if one section of the public cried out as against a scandal, the saner and more widely-spread party regarded it as a hard and striking lesson of a woman who had no conscience and no faith, a lesson to vanity, and irrational ambition.

Art demanded that pity should be shewn to her, but the lesson remained clear and it would have been clearer if you could have made it a lesson to *all*, if you had wished it by shewing your own opinion of the wife, husband and lovers, which would have indicated what opinion others were expected to have. This will to paint things as they are, the adventures of life as they present themselves to us, is not well reasoned in my opinion. To paint the inanimate as a realist or as a poet is all one to me, but when one comes to dealing with the human heart it is different. You cannot abstract yourself from this contemplation for the author is yourself, and other men are readers. However hard you struggle your story cannot be anything but a conversation between author and readers. If you coldly shew him evil without ever shewing him good, he will get angry. He will wonder who is evil, you or himself? You may try to move him and attach him to yourself, but you will never succeed unless you are moved yourself, nor will you succeed if you hide your emotion so well that he believes you indifferent. The reader is right. Supreme impartiality is an antihuman thing, and a novel should be human in the first place. If it is not, no one will want to give it credit for being well written, well composed, well observed in detail. The essential quality will be lacking. It will not be interesting. The reader also fails to attach himself to books in which all the characters are good without a shade of weakness; he can see perfectly well that it is not human either. I believe the special art of telling a story depends on this opposition of characters; but I want to see goodness triumph in the struggle; events may be allowed to crush the good man, but they must not soil him or belittle him, and if he must be sent to the slaughter-house let him feel happier there than his butchers.

15th January, 1876.

I have been writing this letter for three days and every day I have been on the point of throwing it into the fire. It is long and diffuse and probably useless. Natures which are opposed on certain points do not easily interpenetrate and I am afraid you will not understand me any better to-day than you have done before. I am sending this scrawl all the same so that you may see that I am almost as much concerned for you as I am for myself. You need success after that bad luck which stirred you to the depths and I will tell you how you can make success a certainty. Keep your excessive regard for form but do take more trouble about the foundations. Do not take real quality to be an inevitable accompaniment of impeccable form. Let it be represented in your work; dose the fools and idiots whom you love to deride with goodness and power. Show what is solid at the base of these intellectual experiments, and finally leave go of the conventions of realists and return to true reality, which is a mixture of the lovely and the hideous, of dullness and brilliancy, but in which the will to good inevitably finds its place and its use.

I send kisses from us all.

TO DOCTOR HENRI FAVRE

Nohant, 28th May, 1876.

Thank you for your good letter dear friend! I will follow all your prescriptions. I want to add my answers to your questions of to-day to my report of yesterday. My general health is as good as it ever was and in spite of my age (seventy-two soon) I do not feel any approach of senility.

My legs are strong, my sight is better than it has been for the last twenty years, my sleep is calm and my

hands are as sure and skilful as they were in my youth. When I am not suffering from those cruel pains a phenomenon is produced peculiar no doubt to the local malady : I feel that my whole being is stronger and freer than it has ever been. I was a little inclined to have asthma but that has quite disappeared. I can go upstairs as rapidly as my dog. But as part of the functions of life are practically suppressed I cannot help wondering what is to become of me and whether I ought to be prepared for a sudden departure one morning. I would rather know at once than be taken by surprise. I am not of those who affect to submit to the great laws of all and then revolt against the endings of universal life, but in order to get well I will do everything that is prescribed for me and if I get a day's respite from my attacks I will go to Paris to enlist your help for lengthening my task of life, for I feel that I am still useful to my family. Maurice is better. We all send our best wishes for your patient and believe that you will save him—and we love you.

G. Sand.

George Sand took to her bed two days after this letter was written and died after ten days' suffering on 8th June, 1876.

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